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Essay-writing for Schools

by

L. Cope Cornford.

(John Murray. 1903)

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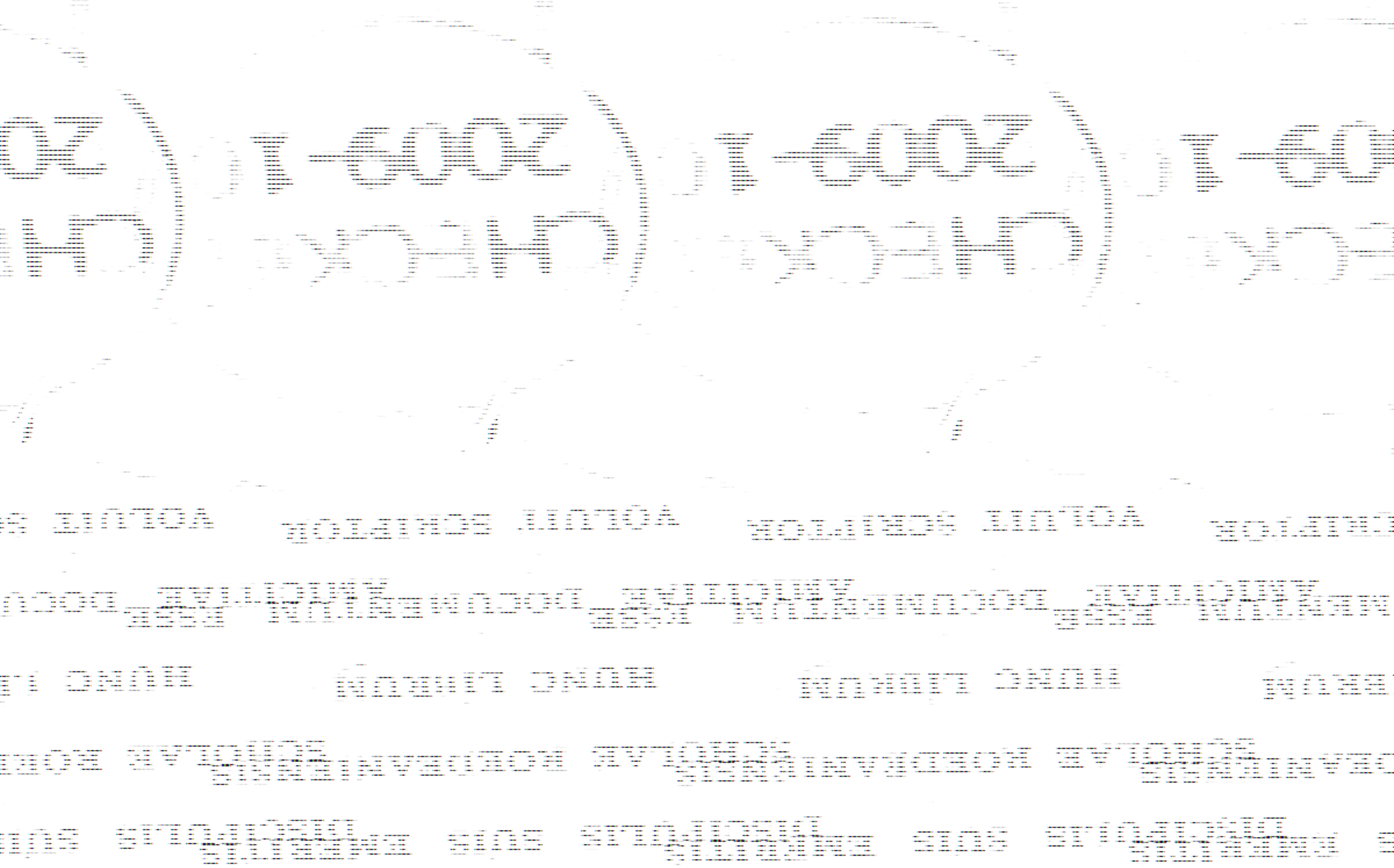
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PREFACE

A SENSE of the importance of teaching the use of the English language to English boys and girls, has been growing of late years in the minds of all those who have devoted consideration to the subject of education. The difficulty has been to find a practical system. The problem involved is two-fold: it is necessary to have, first, a method of teaching the pupil to acquire subject-matter; and, second, a method of teaching him to acquire the art of expression. This little book is an attempt to solve the problem. It is addressed to the pupil; and is designed both for individual use and for class-teaching. With regard to the use of the book for individual study, nothing need be said; but as regards its use in class-teaching, a word may be permitted; the author having employed the system which his book embodies, during an experience of class-teaching extending over several years, with encouraging results.

The teacher's object being to induce the pupil to think for himself, the lessons fall naturally into the form of question and answer. The answers must of course be given in the book; but, as they are supposed to emanate from the pupil—and, in practice, a surprising number do so emanate—the pupils in class must keep their books closed during the working of the preliminary steps of a subject. Each lesson is designed to occupy from forty minutes to an hour: the pupil is then supposed to have from one hour's to three hours' preparation, during which the information he has gained from the lesson may be

shaped into an essay. In his preparation, the book serves to remind him of the lesson, and thus obviates the necessity of his taking notes in class. It also provides him with the model examples of English prose, which serve to guide him in dealing with his subjects. Without such models all English teaching is vain.

The teacher will at once perceive that the questions and answers in the book, which are necessarily somewhat condensed, must often be amplified or simplified, in class-teaching, to suit the age and capacity of the pupils. For the same reason, a section may often be usefully divided into two or more lessons. The completed essays should be carefully corrected; and every sentence in which the smallest correction is made—a correction of punctuation included — should be written out in full by the pupil, on a separate sheet of paper, and shown up. As corrections are of no value unless the pupil understands the reasons thereof, it is better, in practice, to take two or three mistakes and to explain them thoroughly, than to correct every mistake that occurs. The Appendix at the end of the book deals with all the errors that are likely to occur giving both rule and example. An example of a wrong usage is much easier to remember than the rule that forbids it; and it has the additional advantage of embodying the rule itself, in a negative form.

I am much indebted to Mr. John Thompson for his kindness in reading the proofs, and in furnishing me with many valuable suggestions; and to Miss Marguerite Ninet for help with the Appendix. I have also to acknowledge the courtesy of the representatives of those authors, and the courtesy of those publishers, who have granted me permission to quote from copyright works.

L. C. C.

BRIGHTON, *May* 1903.

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ESSAY-WRITING FOR SCHOOLS

INTRODUCTION

FIRST of all, what is an Essay? Perhaps it has never occurred to you to ask yourself that question. Perhaps you have taken for granted that, even if you do not feel immediately equal to making one, at least you know what an essay is. Let us, at any rate, make sure of this point, at the outset; for, in making an essay, as in many other things, the first step is to know exactly what it is that you want to make.

An Essay is the setting forth, the making clear, the illustration of a particular fact,[1] idea, truth,[2] or emotion, or of a particular group of facts, ideas, truths, or emotions, in a short written composition.

For instance, the dictionary definition of the word essay, is itself a little essay on the word, an explanation of it. 'A composition on some special subject, commonly briefer and less complete and formal than a

[1] Anything that is done or comes to pass, anything regarded as actually existent: something concrete as opposed to truth regarded as abstract.

[2] Conformity to fact, or reality, past, present, or future; conformity to rule, standard, model, pattern, or ideal; conformity to the requirements of one's being, or nature; steadfastness; sincerity; right, according to moral law.

treatise,' says the dictionary; also, 'an endeavour to do something; attempt or effort made; also, sometimes, a trial or test, an experiment:' and the dictionary goes on to tell us that the word is derived, through the Old French *assay*, from the Latin *exigo*, prove, from *ex*, out, and *ago*, drive; and that the original word *assay*, which at first meant 'an endeavour to do something; attempt or effort made;' is now only used in the sense of 'a trial or test, an experiment'; as applied to 'the chemical analysis or testing of an alloy or ore, to ascertain the ingredients and their proportion.' Considering, then, the word essay, its origins and history, as set forth, made clear, and illustrated in the dictionary, we find that the nature, the root-idea, of the word is *the endeavour to find out and to make clear the nature of a thing, what that thing really is, by proving, testing or examining it; by* (*as the Latin verb* exigo *suggests*) *the driving—or separating—out the different things of which it is composed* (called its ingredients). And that the word, which originally meant only the endeavour, came in course of time to mean, not only the endeavour but, the result of the endeavour, also. Thus, when you are endeavouring to find out and to make clear the nature of a subject, what it is, you are *essaying* to do so; and when you have done all you can, you have made an *essay*. We may note, also, how that the word in its origins suggests a task which, owing to its very nature, must needs remain incomplete; how that, when you have done your utmost to discover and define, there is still something left unexplained—the result is, after all, only an *attempt*. And, as you go on, you will find, as many have found before you, that such will be your experience. Some of the best essays in the world—of which the Book of Job is an instance—are only statements of the nature of the problem, illustrations of the separate ingredients of the

subject, settings-forth of the various sides of the question. A final solution, or definition, or answer, is not given; because there is none to give.

Such, then, is the essay, the thing you have to make. The next point is, How to make it? How are these things made? Well, in the ordinary way—not the school way—a writer chooses his own subject, because it attracts him; because he feels, either that he will take a certain pleasure in finding out all about it, and then setting forth his ideas; or, that he has already something in his mind for which he impatiently desires to find expression. But, in school life, these conditions hardly obtain. Few young people have the literary bent which would lead them to practise writing for its own sake, as in the first case; and as in the second, even fewer, at the age when one is at school, have sufficient natural impulse of reflection, reinforced by study, to render them uncomfortable until they have had recourse to paper and ink. Moreover, at school one's time is, theoretically at least, fully occupied. Nor is it possible, in school teaching, to fit each student with his own appropriate subject; so that subjects must needs be set which the pupil has to deal with, whether he likes them or not. Therefore, what we have to do, is to learn a method by which any given student of average intelligence may be enabled to treat any given subject within reasonable limits, adequately. Is this possible? It is, eminently possible. But, the method may be learned by practice alone; such practice as this little work proposes to suggest; for, while it is comparatively easy to enumerate rules and maxims, these—even if you could remember them when they are wanted—are open to so many exceptions and qualifications, that they are of small use by themselves.

There is, however, a main principle which it is

absolutely essential to understand and to remember. Supposing now, you have a subject set you, about which you know little or nothing. What is the first thing you must do? The obvious answer is, Gather some information concerning it, from books, or from life at large. Unfortunately, however, the answer is wrong. Gathering such information is the *second* process. The first process in the art of composition is Reflection. And the reason is simple; you can easily prove it by experiment. Until you have thought well over a subject, study of outside information is of little use to you; because, in the first place your mind, unless it be as it were harrowed up by the effort of thought, is in no state to receive information; and in the second, you are not aware exactly what particular points they are upon which you require enlightenment, so that you are likely to waste time gathering information which is not to the purpose. In other words, there are two kinds of information; the first—and most important—sleeps within yourself, awaiting the summons of thought; the second, useless without the first, resides in books and in life at large.

Here, the question naturally arises, What is the object of writing essays at all? Why (you ask) should you, a person of humble pretensions, take the trouble to find out and to express your views upon subjects which have already been treated, many times, by the wise and famous? The reasons are simple and sufficient. The exercise of the art of composition teaches you to think for yourself; a lesson so indescribably important, that it may even be called the beginning and end of all education. Furthermore, the habit of careful writing teaches you how to express yourself with ease and accuracy; and a little consideration will show you that, in certain branches of study, this ability of expres-

sion is indispensable; and that, in the general conduct of life, the advantages arising from a mastery of the English tongue are (to say the least) not to be despised.

Supposing, now, that you have reflected upon a given subject until you feel that you have done all that your powers of thought enable you to do; that you have then collected such outside information as you needed; and that you are now ready to begin writing: the question naturally presents itself, Into what form am I to shape my material? Am I to begin anywhere, and trust to luck? Or, should I proceed on a definite plan? Well, in beginning to write, it is better, of course, to proceed on a definite plan; but, on the other hand, the great thing is to *begin;* bearing in mind that you can always attend to the arrangement—the Disposition, as it is called—of the different parts of the essay, afterwards, when you have the whole composition written out, and under your eye. When you have acquired the habit of ordered composition, the difficulty will disappear of itself. Meanwhile, you are to remember that an essay is composed of three parts:—The Beginning, called the Introduction; the Middle, called the Argument; and the End, called the Conclusion; and that a finished composition must have these divisions clearly marked.

The Introduction, of course, serves to introduce the subject.

The Argument contains the facts, ideas, and sentiments of which your treatment of the subject consists.

The Conclusion serves to round off the composition.

Take, for instance, the little essay on Wisdom, in Chapter III. of the Book of Proverbs:—

> 'Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding.'

This, the Introduction, states the truth which the

Argument goes on to prove and to illustrate; and giving the two words, 'wisdom' and 'understanding' which, taken together, completely express the gift that (according to our author) makes for man's happiness. For, Wisdom means knowledge, such knowledge as a man may acquire from outside; while understanding, signifies the power of comprehension, that very power of thinking for oneself, of which we spoke anon. And the Hebrew word, translated 'understanding' carries the same suggestion of proving, testing, separating out the different parts of a thing, as the Latin word *exigo*, drive out, from which came the original French *assay*, endeavour, and its later development, assay, test, and essay, to try, or endeavour; and *essay*, the result of such endeavour; as we saw above.

'For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her. Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.'

This, the Argument, explains—makes clear—in figurative, eloquent phrase, the nature of wisdom, and why it is that she should give happiness to men. Relying upon the force of the meaning contained in the two expressions of the Introduction, wisdom in the sense both of knowledge, and understanding, as sufficiently explanatory, the Argument treats them as one, thus dealing throughout with the complete idea, Wisdom.

'She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her: and happy is every one that retaineth her.'

This, the Conclusion, sums up, in the first half of the sentence, the whole exposition of the Argument; and

I

AN ENGLISH VILLAGE

THE first thing you have to do, is to make sure that you understand the exact meaning of the title of the essay, which conveys the meaning of the subject. In this case, the meaning is plain; the subject being an English Village, evidently you are to make plain to the reader what kind of place an English Village is. The next thing you must do, is to ascertain the nature of the subject; if it be Concrete or Abstract, or a combination of the two. For, upon the nature of the subject depends the nature of your treatment of it. Now, a concrete subject is one that deals with practical experience; with facts, material objects, things seen.[1] An abstract subject deals with ideas, theories, fancies, visionary matters and things unseen.[2] It is easy to see that almost any given subject—such as Friendship —Taste—Telling the Truth—might be treated from either an Abstract or a Concrete point of view. But,

[1] 'In a concrete notion the objects with their qualities as it were grow together, and are perceived together.'

[2] 'Viewed apart from concrete form, individual example, or actual practice, said of numbers, attributes, qualities, etc.; general, as opposed to particular; theoretical, as opposed to practical. . . . Ideal; imaginary; [illegible] real, practical, rational.'

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in this case, although it would be possible to write an essay under the title of an English Village, which dealt with Abstract ideas, it seems more natural to treat the subject from the point of view of actual experience; that is, as a Concrete subject. In dealing with a Concrete subject, you have to ask yourself, first, What do I know about it? A little Reflection will show you what you know, and (what is more important) what you don't know. If you have lived for long in a village, you ought to have plenty to say, concerning its daily life; if you have stayed in such a place for a short time, you can at least describe its aspect—what it looks like—and its daily life.

Assuming, now, that you have completed your preliminary task of Reflection, you may begin to get the skeleton of the essay together, by means of notes. Each note will presently be expanded into a paragraph. Supposing, then, we begin by setting down the notes Aspect, and Daily Life. You have now to select your point of view; the single idea which is to underlie and to inspire your composition; and which every word you write must help to illustrate. Thus, at the outset, you strike the first law of composition; the Selection of the Central Idea. Its observance is not a matter of choice; it is a matter of necessity; for, if you disregard the law, your essay will be worth nothing—nothing at all. What, then, is to be your Central Idea? You must choose it from among many which offer themselves. For, if you think a moment, you will see, with regard to the first head, Aspect, that the look of a place varies from season to season, month to month, even from hour to hour. Hence, you must choose one particular aspect. As you naturally desire your essay to be as good as possible, I suggest that you choose the most picturesque aspect known to you.

And with regard to the second head, Daily Life, also, there are various points of view. There are, for instance, the points of view of monotony, tranquillity, heavy and continual toil, dulness, poverty, simplicity, hardship, beauty, ugliness. Again, I suggest that you choose the best aspect; which, in this case, seems also the most obvious; I mean the aspect of beautiful tranquillity. Thus, you have in addition to your two chief headings, two sub-headings: under Aspect, Beauty, illustrated by (say) early morning—sunlight; and under Daily Life, Tranquillity. Your Central Idea, then, is two-fold: the Picturesqueness—the beauty—and the Tranquillity of an English village. How are you going to develop and to illustrate it? With regard to Aspect, your way is plain; you must take the best—that is, the most beautiful—you can find; in this case (for the sake of argument) a picture of early morning in summer. The treatment of Daily Life is not so simple to plan, though it may be the easier to execute. The most natural method would seem to be, to take the events of one day, which you recollect, and to describe them, in so far as they illustrate the tranquillity of the life, as they occurred. But, as the events of one particular day might not be sufficient to make a really typical—that is, characteristic—picture, it will be better to collect in your mind all the characteristic little incidents, and describe them as happening on one particular day.

Now add to your notes. Each note represents a paragraph, into which it will presently be expanded. It is not necessary that your notes should be set down in the order which it is best to follow in the paragraphs they represent. They are so arranged here, for the sake of clearness; but in practice, your notes are set down as they occur to your mind. They are then either rearranged before you begin to write, or they are re-

ferred to in the order in which you require them, during the actual writing of the first draft.

NOTES. — *Central Idea* :— Picturesque Tranquillity. *Aspect* :—Early morning in summer in farmhouse garden—the hillside—church—hanging wood—sheep.

Daily Life :—Farm noises—daily tasks—departure of milk—ducks—cows—valley pastures—breakfast—the field-labourer—his life—tranquillity—age—feeding chickens—the farmer—the yeoman (quotation).

Aspect.—Afternoon, from same point of view.

Daily Life.—End of day, corresponding with beginning — cows — chickens — ducks — milk-van—labourers.

Aspect.—Evening noises—cricket—sheep, resting cattle—rooks—sunset—night.

You have, now, your material in a convenient form, under your hand. Before beginning to pl it into shape, arrange it roughly into the three constructional divisions of Introduction, Argument, and Conclusion. *Introduction* :— Aspect—early morning. *Argument* : — Daily Life, etc. *Conclusion* :—Aspect again—night.

Now begin to write your first draft, or rough copy. But, let me caution you, here, once for all, against being misled by the common expression, 'rough copy.' It does not imply that you may write carelessly. A rough copy should be composed with freedom, but with care, and should be written as neatly, and with as scrupulous an attention to 'the style of the copy,' as a fair copy. The only object of writing a rough copy—more accurately, a first draft—is, that you may presently improve on what you have done, not by way of correction of unnecessary

errors but, by doing a little better than you were able to do upon your first attempt. And you may call to mind that (although the passing of examinations is not the only object of life) in an examination you may have no time to write two copies; you will have to rely upon your first attempt; and unless you have acquired the habit of care, you will assuredly fail. Leave either plenty of space between the lines, or a wide margin, for corrections.

Have your notes before you as you write: but remember, that these are only the scaffolding of the building; that you are not bound to follow their arrangement, if a better disposition occurs to you as you write; and that, in any case, the arrangement will be subject to revision when you have completed your first draft.

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Firs Draft

Introduction.—The garden of the old farmhouse lies all in a cool morning shadow, pearled with dew. Beyond the old yew-trees, beyond the low, red-roofed church tower, the hanging woods and the great green slope

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First Draft corrected for Fair copy, with explanatory notes.

'old' used in preceding sentence; 'low' inappropriate to tower; too many adjectives to qualify 'tower' and 'downland'; 'bathed' inexpressive. Correct to:—Beyond the yew-trees, beyond the square church

of the downland are bathed in sunlight. The cattle are feeding on the near pasture ;

tower, capped with red, the hanging woods and the slope of downland shine in a peaceful radiance of sunlight.

so still is the air, you may hear the sounds of the wrenching of the fresh grass, and the steady munching of the placid beasts. Higher on the hill, a moving flock of sheep shews in a patch of dull grey upon the green. Upon the sky-line, stands the bent figure of the shepherd, his dog crouched beside him ; appearing (by a curious illusion common upon the downs) larger than his real size.

a clumsy construction. Correct to : — you may hear them wrenching the grass from its roots, and munching contentedly.

what sort of sky-line ? Correct to :—curved sky-line.

inexpressive. Correct to :— of heroic proportions.

(*Transition to*—) The crow of the farmyard cock breaks the sunny stillness ; (— *Argument.*) and now, the

The sentence forms the transition from the *Aspect* (Introduction) to the *Daily Life* (Argument).

day's slow round of tasks begins; there is a rattle of milk-cans, coming from beyond the wall under the trees, which separates the garden from the farmyard. The early milk-van is preparing to start for the neighbouring town, which lies beyond the shoulder of the hills. A loud noise of quacking ducks arises; and a solemn procession waddles out from their sleeping quarters, across the road, leaving flat foot-prints in the white dust, dives through a hole in the low flint wall, and breaks up into a cheerful conclave on the round dew-pond.

Now come the cows, one

'which' refers grammatically to trees; whereas 'wall' is the antecedent. Correct to:—beyond the wall, which, buried in foliage, separates, etc.

Expression tame. Correct to:—the great town, which lies beyond the green barrier of the hills.

'loud' unnecessary. Omit it.

Omit as unnecessary, 'out from their sleeping quarters.'

Correct to:—printing webbed foot-marks, etc.

'breaks up into,' better:—appears in cheerful, etc.

New paragraph unnecessary—run on (the technical expression).

by one, filing from the milking sheds towards their pastures. One by one they pass into the shadow of the great ilexes which over-arch the roadway by the Vicarage gate, and emerge into the wide valley, which slopes to the edge of the cliffs. Thin wreaths of smoke ascend from the cottage chimneys; and the men go along the road to the single row of houses, where breakfast is preparing. Presently they emerge, and lean, pipe in mouth, against walls. These stolid, round-shouldered, somewhat meagre figures, dressed in heavy corduroy, earth-coloured, and great boots, are on their

'which,' better:—that, because used with active verb.

Make a better picture:—whose green curves round upon the blue uplifted wall of the sea. New paragraph.

'go' inexpressive. Correct to:—slouch.

'where.' Correct to wherein (in preference to in which).

'against walls,' vague. Correct to:—against convenient wall and gate.

'heavy' unnecessary. Correct to:—earth-hued corduroy, and heavy boots.

feet and working continuously from four or five in the morning until eight or nine at night. They began as boys, attending on their elders; and their frames gradually became hardened to an iron endurance. See the labourers, as they trudge away, each one to his task: as, perhaps, he has gone, for twenty, thirty, forty years; to perform precisely the same tasks, in precisely the same way; and ask yourself, what kind of a life is this of the labouring hind?

Requires qualification. Correct to:—working continuously—slowly, it is true, but still working—from, etc.

The point of the sentence being 'endurance,' hold it in suspense:—Beginning work as boys, in attendance on their elders, their frames, etc.

'labourers,' inexpressive. Correct to:—rustic figures.

Render more vividly:—as he has trudged, in dust or mire, sun or rain, for etc.

It is monotonous, but it is tranquil. The soothing influence of the open air and the continual toil, stupefy

Inexpressive. Correct to: —Monotonous, if you will; but, tranquil, above all.

Improve to:—The vast sedative of the open air, the perpetual toil, lull the brain

the labourer to an animal indifference. He has no ambition, or anxiety; he desires nothing beyond what he has, because he has long ago given up all hope of change. Despite his hard life, the field labourer often attains a great age; you may see old fellows of seventy or eighty, crippled with rheumatism indeed, but still hearty; hobbling about among the chickens, or seated for hours under the lee of the cottage wall.

into the placid quiescence of the animal.

'He' — who? Correct to: —The country labourer.

better: — no ambition, no anxiety.

'given up,' better: — forgotten.

omit from 'hobbling' to 'wall,' as you present the picture immediately afterwards; put full stop after 'hearty,' and run on.

There he goes, the village patriarch, with a big basket on his arm, supporting his tardy footsteps with a stout stick, along the little street to the poultry-paddock. Hens

and cockerels rush about him ; distant fowls racing in a panic lest the food should be all gone before they reach the feast ; crested cocks feigning a dignified indifference, and doing it very badly, with spurts of temper, and vicious pecks to left and right ; the whole crowd clucking and fighting and gobbling, as though a meal were an extraordinary rarity, instead of a regular twice-a-day occurrence.

'rush,' better :—flock.

better : — 'rushing to the feast, panic-stricken lest their share be gone before,' etc.

The farmer, starting on his morning rounds, stops for a word or two with the old man, who served his father before him, and, very likely, *his* father before *him*. The farmer talks with the same

Do not rely on italics to help you out of obscurity. 'His' and 'him' must, for the sake of clearness, refer to the same person. Correct to :—his grandfather also.

nasal drawl as his men, though he pronounces his words with an educated precision. He is a tall, quiet man, bronzed and good-looking.

Inexpressive. Correct to:—He is tall and bronzed and of a handsome, kindly countenance; with the quiet eye and placid manner of the out-of-doors man.

His family has farmed the land for two hundred years; and, although the estate, since the bad times, has passed from his possession, he farms it still, holding on a yearly tenure. And his son will probably do the same. For, he is of the yeoman class; the class which is being legislated and taxed out of existence; and with it go the pith and sinew of England. 'His outside,' says Sir Thomas Overbury, writing in the six-

'His son,' etc. Very likely; but the statement is irrelevant. Omit it.

Phrase a little obscure. Correct to:—with the yeoman go, etc.

Always introduce one or more good quotations. This seems an appropriate place.

teenth century, 'his outside is an ancient yeoman of England, though his inside may give arms (with the best gentleman) and ne'er see the herald. There is no truer servant in the house than himself. Though he be master, he says not to his servants, Go to field, but, Let us go ; and with his own eye doth both fatten his flock and set forward all manner of husbandry.' And so it is. He was up at four o'clock this morning, overseeing the despatch of the milk ; now, he is away to the distant uplands of the farm ; a round of four or five miles to complete before the noon-day dinner.

Insert before 'a round':—
for, he has.

(*Transition to* —) By that time, the great green slope that rises away from the farmhouse garden, is touched with shadow; by mid-afternoon, it lies wholly in the shade; and strollers from the neighbouring town sit under the trees that fringe the churchyard wall; and children play there. The round of farm labours is wheeling slowly to full circle; the cows are trailing home, uplifting deep-voiced demands for the milking shed; the chickens are sedately going to roost, by twos and threes; the ducks waddle back in single file across the road; the van comes rattling in with the empty milk-

First hint of transition from *Daily Life* (Argument), to *Aspect* again, with which, as it answers to the Introduction, you are to conclude. Take the same features, but under a different aspect, that of afternoon, and evening.

a clumsy phrase. Simplify to :—lowing as they come.

originally centre of culture, learning and high conduct, has 'dwindled' to a polite drawing-room. Hence, full explanation of what Courtesy really is, must deal with its original signification, which it has only lost temporarily; and hence again, must deal with the institution of the Court most nearly approaching its own ideal; say, Court of Queen Elizabeth in time of Renaissance (*cf.* Raleigh) and contrast with existing institution. Court of Elizabeth: Francis Bacon, Edmund Spenser, Francis Drake, as courtiers, exhibiting qualities of Philosophy, Learning, Poetry, Adventure, Skill in Arms and the Science of Warfare, Statesmanship, Loyalty, Polished Manners, a Love of Beauty. True Courtesy consists in combination of these virtues: hence, the Courtier the Perfect Man; and hence, also, the true Courtier may be entirely unconnected with a Court. Compare, in our own day, Charles Darwin, Robert Browning, Charles George Gordon; modern equivalents of Elizabethan Courtiers, yet never at Court. Corollary: Court has changed character, and lost virtues of which it was once the exemplar; exceptions, often doubtful, statesmanship and loyalty; exception, polite manners—'manner and conduct manifesting the greatest possible consideration for other people.' Yet virtues of Courtesy survive, exemplified in men who have nothing to do at Court.

We have now the block of material before us, ready to shape into an essay. Before we begin, let us recapitulate the steps of the process by means of which we obtained the material. Remember, that the process is always the same, in dealing with an abstract subject. 1. Definition of Title. 2. Classification of Subject. 3. Exhaustive Definition; by means of investigation into nature of subject, conducted by Reflection; by questioning, and by the help of books; keeping careful notes of results.

Now, with your notes before you, the first real difficulty in the task must be confronted. The first law of composition must be obeyed; the law of the Central Idea. What is to be the Central Idea of your explanation and illustration of Courtesy? Is not the idea which most naturally presents itself, that of Courtesy as signifying a Counsel of Perfection? This idea will be explained and illustrated by a sketch of the history of the word, some illustration of the Court of Queen Elizabeth, and a contrasting illustration of the modern English Court. Your material must now be arranged in accordance with the central idea. Either, you begin to write the rough copy at once, revising the arrangement when you have done, and dividing into Introduction, Argument and Conclusion, and articulating into paragraphs; or, you arrange your material in the three main divisions of Introduction, Argument and Conclusion, and dispose your paragraphs under headings, before beginning to write. You should choose the alternative easiest to yourself. If you decide to arrange your divisions and paragraphs before beginning to write, your notes will run somewhat as follows:—

Introduction. Quotation, Polonius' advice to Laertes, *Hamlet* — advice of old Courtier upon Courtesy — definition — modern acceptation of meaning.

Argument. King, *cf.* Carlyle—Court, corresponding—as King,so Court—as Court,so Courtesy —surviving meaning—courteous man sincerely polite man—Queen Elizabeth—her Court, time of Renaissance (*cf.* Raleigh)—Ideal of Perfection—instances, Bacon, Spenser, Drake—their virtues and accomplishments—statesmanship, not policy —love of beauty—sum up. Contrast to our time

and of evil; and courtesy has signified, now, the whole sphere of virtue; and again, the seven deadly sins; and it speaks something to the credit of the generations of Courts, that one piece of its original meaning, at least, has survived all revolutions unchanged—that of a sincere politeness.

'signified,' better :—stood by implication, now, for the etc.; and again, for the etc.

'it' ambiguous. Correct to: —there is a tribute to the generations of Courts, in that one element of courtesy's signification, at least, etc.

In our days — in this 'ghastly, thin-faced time of ours'—'tis all we have left. The courteous man (himself daily rarer) is but the man of breeding and politeness.

meaning incomplete. Insert after bracket :—in our sense of the phrase.

But, turn we to the time of Queen Elizabeth, which was also the time of the English Renaissance, when the Court in England attained its full glory. The Queen, whatever were her qualities, had the notable and splendid talent of gathering great men about her. 'The way to political influence, to social advancement, to power and consideration and fame, lay through the court, in England as in Italy,' says Mr. Raleigh, of the Court of Elizabeth, in his admirable Introduction to Hoby's *Courtier*.

Better :—its apotheosis.

Better :—had this at least— the notable, etc.

The Sovereign, in fact, was

regarded as—theoretically—perfect ; and, since She was compact of virtues, the Court did actually become a true Mirror of Virtue ; and the Courtier — in intention at least — the Perfect Man. Time would fail to tell of the worthies of the Elizabethan age, the great Courtiers who left us examples so noble.

'true' unnecessary after 'actually.' Correct to :— lustrous.

The names of three must suffice : Francis Bacon, Edmund Spenser, Francis Drake. Bacon, who took 'all knowledge to be his province,' laid the foundations of philosophy and of science in England (and, incidentally, fixed the form of the Essay) ; Spenser, in his *Faerie Queene*, enshrined in beautiful verse the whole ideal of virtue of his day ; the ideal (in fact) of courtesy ; Drake carried the flag of England round the world ; and plundered and out-generalled and vanquished the national foe with a valour and a brilliance of invention which (it is scarce too much to say) taught the elements of strategy and tactics to the great sea-captains who came after him.

The whole point of the argument lies in these instances ; but, owing to the limited scope of the essay, they are treated in as few — and as forcible—words as possible.

Nor were these things all. For, the Elizabethan Courtier

The pupil who possesses no more than a cram-book knowledge of Elizabeth's reign, could yet, by the exercise of reflection, arrive at these considerations.

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was no specialist; philosopher, or poet, or adventurer though he were, he made the better statesman and administrator; he was wise in affairs; in his eyes, the welfare of the state was paramount. He was not a politician — a very different animal. 'I used,' said Robert Louis Stevenson, 'I used to think meanly of the plumber; but, how he shines beside the politician!' And one and all, the Courtiers possessed the love of beauty, the taste for a refined magnificence.

What a bead-roll of virtues and accomplishments have we now, properly belonging to a Court, and commonly denominated courtesy: philosophy, science, poetry, adventure, skill in arms, statesmanship, loyalty, the love of beauty. A 'sincere politeness,' too; that is included as of course.

And yet, the sincere politeness is all that has survived of the virtues proper to a Court. Where are the great men of our time, who found 'the way to political influence, to social advancement,

more correctly: — that he was.

Or, better:—the welfare of the State came before all.

A digression; admissible, because bearing on Central Idea.

'the taste,' better: — the right taste.[1]

End sentence at 'now!' and continue:—Yet, they are all commonly denominated, etc.

better:—survived the wrack of a treasure, once the natural heritage of the Court.

[1] In the Elizabethan sense of the word *right*—real, genuine.

to power and consideration and fame' in the Court? The great men we know: but, although the virtues of courtesy live again in them, they are not of the Court. Charles Darwin, Robert Browning, and Charles George Gordon, may stand as representing some equivalent to the three renowned Elizabethans: Bacon, Spenser, Drake: as philosopher and scientist, poet, and heroic adventurer. What had the Court to do with them, or they with the Court? Nothing. The Court neither helped nor hindered the patient man of science, the assiduous poet: and the soldier was betrayed to death by a Minister of the Crown. True, the late Lord Tennyson was of the Court; yet his example does but emphasize the lack of others.

(*Transition to*—) The Court, to use Mr. Raleigh's phrase, has 'dwindled into a drawing-room'; where, of all the courtly virtues, 'sincere politeness' alone remains: for, loyalty and statesmanship must be counted but uncertain exceptions. To trace the Court's decline, and the

transpose 'in the Court' to after 'found.'

better:—but — sad contradiction—although, etc.

to complete antithesis, insert after 'Gordon':—three notable Victorians.

Contrast to Elizabethan Court is little more than suggested, as before, but suggested as pointedly as possible. Questions and answers are sometimes more forcible than direct statement.

too bald a statement. Correct to:—and for the soldier —twist it how you will, it comes to this—he was, etc.

Requires phrase of transition. Before 'the Court,' insert:— 'Tis true, 'tis pity—but.

Better:—To trace the causes of the Court's decline, and

exile of courtesy, would be to wander beyond the limits of this essay.

(—*Conclusion.*) But, the virtues of courtesy, though exiled from their natural home, still survive and flourish ; and there are men of our time, who never saw a Court, who yet for their courtesy, may be named beside their great ancestors, the Courtiers of the Renaissance.

the steps of that declension, and the exile, etc.

Better :—and who may yet, for their courtesy, be named, etc.

EXAMPLE II

COURTESY

What It Was and What It Is

Fair copy, embodying corrections

This above all,—to thine own self be true ;
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.—*Hamlet.*

Polonius' advice to Laertes is the counsel of an old Courtier to a young Courtier ; and what he counsels is (in a word) Courtesy. For, courtesy, as a glance at the history of the word will show, means that which is proper to a Court. It is true that, in modern parlance, the word merely signifies a sincere politeness ; but, it may be that, in the course of its journey through the centuries, it has dropped some of its meaning by the way. There have been Kings in England since English history began—save for the delirious interval of the Rebellion and Cromwell's brief dictatorship—and where there is a King, there must be a Court, also.

Now, the Ideal King is the Noblest Man ; 'King, *Könning*, which means *Can*-ning, Able-man,' says Carlyle, in his German-English ; and goes on to describe this being as 'the truest-hearted, justest, the Noblest Man : what he *tells us to do* must be precisely the wisest, fittest, that we could anywhere or anyhow learn.'

The King's Court, then, which is his Household, will naturally be an assemblage of men like-minded with himself, chosen by him to execute his will. And as the King, so the Court. In so far as the King bodies forth the virtues of ideal kingship, will the Court become the mirror of high conduct. And as the King distorts the image of virtue, so will the Court present its reflection. In the long annals of English history, there are records both of good Kings and of evil ; and courtesy has stood by implication, now, for the whole sphere of virtue ; and again, for the seven deadly sins ; and there is a tribute to the generations of Courts, in that one element of courtesy's original signification, at least, has survived all revolutions unchanged—that of a sincere politeness.

In our days—in this 'ghastly, thin-faced time of ours'—'tis all we have left. The courteous man (himself daily rarer) in our sense of the phrase, is but the man of breeding and politeness.

But, turn we to the time of Queen Elizabeth, which was also the time of the English Renaissance, when the Court in England attained its apotheosis. The Queen, whatever were her qualities, had this at least—the notable and splendid talent of gathering great men about her. 'The way to political influence, to social advancement, to power and consideration and fame, lay through the Court, in England as in Italy,' says Mr. Raleigh, of the Court of Elizabeth, in his admirable introduction to Hoby's *Courtier*.

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would fail to tell of the worthies of the Elizabethan age, the great Courtiers who left us examples so noble.

The names of three must suffice : Francis Bacon, Edmund Spenser, Francis Drake. Bacon, who took 'all knowledge to be his province,' laid the foundations of philosophy and of science in England (and, incidentally, fixed the form of the Essay) ; Spenser, in his *Faerie Queene*, enshrined in beautiful verse the whole ideal of virtue of his day ; the ideal (in fact) of courtesy ; Drake carried the flag of England round the world ; and plundered and out-generalled and vanquished the national foe with a valour and a brilliance of invention which (it is scarce too much to say) taught the elements of strategy and tactics to the great sea-captains who came after him.

Nor were these things all. For, the Elizabethan Courtier was no specialist : philosopher, or poet, or adventurer that he was, he made the better statesman and administrator ; he was wise in affairs ; in his eyes, the welfare of the State came before all. He was not a politician—a very different animal. 'I used,' said Robert Louis Stevenson, 'I used to think meanly of the plumber ; but, how he shines beside the politician !' And one and all, the Courtiers possessed the love of beauty, the right taste for a refined magnificence.

What a bead-roll of virtues and accomplishments have we now ! Yet, they are all commonly denominated courtesy : philosophy, science, poetry, adventure, skill in arms, statesmanship, loyalty, the love of beauty. A 'sincere politeness,' too ; that is included as of course.

And yet, the sincere politeness is all that has survived of the wrack of a treasure, once the natural heritage of the Court. Where are the great men of our time, who found in the Court 'the way to political influence, to social advancement, to power and consideration and fame' ? The great men we know : but — sad contradiction — although the virtues of courtesy live again in them, they are not of the Court. Charles Darwin, Robert Browning, and Charles George Gordon, three notable Victorians, may stand as representing

some equivalent to the three renowned Elizabethans: Bacon, Spenser, Drake; as philosopher and scientist, poet, and heroic adventurer. What had the Court to do with them, or they with the Court? Nothing. The Court neither helped nor hindered the patient man of science, the assiduous poet; and for the soldier—twist it how you will, it comes to this—he was betrayed to death by a Minister of the Crown. True, the late Lord Tennyson was of the Court; yet his example does but emphasize the lack of others.

'Tis true, 'tis pity—but the Court, to use Mr. Raleigh's phrase, has 'dwindled into a drawing-room'; where, of all the courtly virtues, 'sincere politeness' alone remains; for, loyalty and statesmanship must be counted but uncertain exceptions. To trace the causes of the Court's decline, and the steps of that declension, and the exile of courtesy, would be to wander beyond the limits of this essay.

But, the virtues of courtesy, though exiled from their natural home, still survive and flourish; and there are men of our time, who never saw a Court, and who may yet, for their courtesy, be named beside their great ancestors, the Courtiers of the Renaissance.

III

ON FAMILIAR STYLE

IN treating this subject, you are to work the preliminary steps, as in the two foregoing subjects. Then, compare your result with the essay on the same subject, which is taken from the writings of William Hazlitt. Having first dealt with the subject yourself, you will be in a position to appreciate its difficulties, and the way in which a great writer meets and overcomes them. Thus, you will learn something of his method; and his conclusions will serve to confirm and to correct your own; and so, in writing your essay, you will be enabled to fortify and to illustrate your line of argument by his.

The first step is, as always, to define the title of the essay to yourself. What is meant by Familiar Style? The word Style may be defined as a particular mode of outward expression of an idea; as applied to manner, conduct, speech, dress; to a work of art, whether of architecture, painting, sculpture, music, oratory, the drama, or of literature. The word Familiar, means the state of intimate acquaintance; the origin of the word being the Latin, *familia*, household, inclusive of family and slaves; which word, says Crabbe (*English Synonyms*), 'includes in it every circumstance of con-

nexion and relationship.' It is easy to see how the word, which at first meant the state of connection and relationship, came to mean the kind of state which such connection and relationship would naturally tend to create; namely, a state of intimate acquaintance. So that our title means:—A particular mode of outward expression, applied to one of the uses enumerated above, and used in relation to one with whom we have an intimate acquaintance. Which particular mode is here meant? The most obvious meaning is, the mode of expression as applied to literature, or writing. And who is the one with whom we have, or are supposed to have, an intimate acquaintance? The reader. The essay, then, will deal with—what? The method of addressing your reader in an intimate way. So far, so good.

The second step, is to define to yourself what kind of subject you have to do with. Is it Abstract, Concrete, or the two combined? As the subject seems to suggest a treatment that deals both with theory and practice, we may call it Combined. And in treating a Combined subject, how do we begin our investigation, which is to gain us our material? By striking the keynote of the Central Idea, as in a Concrete subject? Or by definition, as in an Abstract Subject? As a general rule, by definition. You cannot begin to write an essay, which is an explanation, while you have anything unexplained in your own mind. Take note-book and pen, and begin to ask yourself questions.

What is Style? A mode of expression. That is your first note. Yes, but what is it that makes a mode, or manner, of expression? Why, since language (for instance) is a common possession, should individual use of it differ? Obviously, because individuals occupy different points of view. But, why do they occupy different points of view? Because each individual

differs from the other. In what way? In character, intelligence, endowment of qualities: in one word, temperament. What is the conclusion? That differences of expression—or style—arise from differences of temperament. The hackneyed quotation from Buffon comes to mind:—*Le style, c'est l'homme même*. Make a note of the conclusion, at which we have arrived, and the quotation, and continue. What is the next question? Refer to the title. We are dealing, not with style as such but, with familiar style; which is, according to our conclusion, the expression of a man's self to his readers, his audience, as to an intimate acquaintance. This seems to bring us to the Concrete part of the subject; for, since every one who writes, addresses his readers, we, as readers, must needs have plenty of experience to draw upon, in discussing the matter of style. And as we are (fortunately) limited to the discussion of *familiar* style, the next question that naturally arises, is:—What is the advantage, and what the disadvantage, of using a familiar style? In order to solve this problem, what question are we to ask, next? The question which must always be asked, in debating upon which, out of several, courses should be followed:—What is the primary object of your action? When that is made clear, you will adopt the course which will most effectually accomplish your end.

In other words, with what object does a writer express himself at all? Surely, with the object of conveying his ideas to others. In what different styles, does experience tell us, do authors choose to convey their meaning? Experience tells us that one writer uses short and simple words and phrases;[1] another employs long, Latinised expressions;[2] another makes brief

[1] Bunyan, Defoe, Swift.
[2] Milton, Sir Thomas Browne, De Quincey.

sentences;[1] another builds long periods;[2] another delights to ornament his pages with all sorts of old, queer words;[3] another lectures like a schoolmaster;[4] another talks like a friend.[5] Your reading will supply you with instances, which you should use to illustrate your point. Now, which is the best of these different styles? That which will best convey the author's ideas to his readers. And which is that? The answer is supplied by experience. The Familiar Style. Why? Because in familiar talk, or writing, the speaker, or writer, knowing the persons whom he is addressing, naturally adapts his expression to their capacity of understanding. Consciously or unconsciously, he puts himself in the place of his hearer, or reader; and speaks to them in the way they understand.

At this point, make up your notes:—Advantages and disadvantages of familiar style. Object of expression, to convey meaning. Experience teaches us various modes of expression, used by writers. Quote instances. That which best fulfils object of expression, familiar style; because author adapts expression therein to known capacity of reader.

This, it would seem, is the great advantage of the familiar style. But, has it no disadvantage? The question immediately arises:—How is it, if the familiar style be the best for the author's purpose, that every author does not use it? In the first place, it is liable to degenerate into vulgarity of expression, and slang. To complete the answer, we must go back to the definition of style—the expression of a man's self; and we ask:—If style be the expression of a man's self,

[1] John Earle, Owen Felltham.
[2] Jeremy Taylor, Lord Clarendon, Johnson.
[3] Charles Lamb. [4] Carlyle, Macaulay.
[5] Fielding, Thackeray, Sterne, Charles Lamb.

how does it come about that he has any choice in the mode of his expression? In order to answer, we refer to experience; and experience tells us that, in the first place, it is often the peculiarity of a man's self that leads him deliberately to choose an unfamiliar—not necessarily an obscure—mode of expression; that *is* his mode of expression; that expresses his character, just as the attire of a dandy expresses, not a desire to please—or at least accord with—others but, himself. And in the second, we find, in practice, that, while an author who is resolved to express *himself*, has not, for that very reason, much choice as to his mode, or style; yet he has always a certain margin of choice. His temperament may be peculiar, or exalted; so that he cannot become familiar without sacrificing something of what he would otherwise have expressed; or, his temperament may be so nearly alike, his intelligence so nearly on a level, with the intelligence of his readers, that he may be able to adapt his expression without sacrificing any part of his idea. And the variations between the alternatives are infinite; which accounts for the infinite subtle differences in style.

Again, make up your notes:—But, after all, choice in the matter of expression is limited. Some write in unfamiliar—not necessarily obscure—mode, owing to peculiarity of temperament, leading them to regard unfamiliarity of phrase as chief object of expression. Some, removed from readers by difference of temperament, cannot become familiar without sacrifice. Others are able to adapt without sacrifice.

And what—for a last question—does experience tell us is the conclusion of the matter? Experience tells us, that the work of the greatest authors is known by a simplicity of style, which—allowing for a certain margin of intelligence in the reader, constantly varying

—comes very near to what we mean by Familiar Style.

Now to compare our results, with the conclusions of William Hazlitt, in his essay On Familiar Style (*Table Talk, xxiv.*). Read the whole essay, if you can obtain the book; if you are unable to do so, make the best use of the following extracts from it.

EXAMPLE III

ON FAMILIAR STYLE

WILLIAM HAZLITT (1778-1830)

TABLE TALK. XXIV.

It is not easy to write a familiar style. Many people mistake a familiar for a vulgar style, and suppose that to write without affectation is to write at random. On the contrary, there is nothing that requires more precision, and, if I may so say, purity of expression, than the style I am speaking of. It utterly rejects not only all unmeaning pomp, but all low, cant phrases, and loose, unconnected, *slip-shod* allusions. It is not to take the first word that offers, but the best word in common use; it is not to throw words together in any combination we please, but to follow and avail ourselves of the true idiom of the language.[1] To write a genuine familiar or truly English style, is to write as any one would speak in common conversation, who had a thorough command and choice of words, or who could discourse with ease, force, and perspicuity, setting aside all pedantic and oratorical flourishes. Or, to give another illustration, to

[1] Example of the Balanced Sentence. "Balance consists in taking words expressive of ideas that are meant to be compared or contrasted, and planting them in corresponding grammatical places, in similarly constructed phrases or clauses of sentences." (Minto.)

write naturally is the same thing in regard to common conversation, as to read naturally is in regard to common speech. It does not follow that it is an easy thing to give the true accent and inflection to the words you utter, because you do not attempt to rise above the level of ordinary life and colloquial speaking. You do not assume indeed the solemnity of the pulpit, or the tone of stage-declamation: neither are you at liberty to gabble on at a venture, without emphasis or discretion, or to resort to vulgar dialect or clownish pronunciation. You must steer a middle course. . . .

The reason why I object to Dr. Johnson's style is, that there is no discrimination, no selection, no variety in it. He uses none but 'tall, opaque words,' taken from the 'first row of the rubric':—words with the greatest number of syllables, or Latin phrases with merely English terminations. If a fine style depended on this sort of arbitrary pretension, it would be fair to judge of an author's elegance by the measurement of his words, and the substitution of foreign circumlocutions (with no precise associations) for the mother-tongue. . . .

A truly natural or familiar style can never be quaint or vulgar, for this reason, that it is of universal force and applicability, and that quaintness and vulgarity arise out of the immediate conception of certain words with coarse and disagreeable, or with confined ideas. The last form what we understand by *cant* or *slang* phrases. To give an example of what is not very clear in the general statement. I should say that the phrase *To cut with a knife*, or *To cut a piece of wood*, is perfectly free from vulgarity, because it is perfectly common: but to *cut an acquaintance* is not quite unexceptionable, because it is not perfectly common or intelligible, and has hardly yet escaped out of the limits of slang phraseology. . . .

I conceive that words are like money, not the worse for being common, but that it is the stamp of custom alone that gives them circulation or value. I am fastidious in this

respect, and would almost as soon coin the currency of the realm as counterfeit the King's English. . . .

The proper force of words lies not in the words themselves, but in their application. A word may be a fine-sounding word, of an unusual length, and very imposing from its learning and novelty, and yet in the connection in which it is introduced, may be quite pointless and irrelevant. It is not pomp or pretension, but the adaptation of the expression to the idea that clenches a writer's meaning . . .

There are those who hoard up and make a cautious display of nothing but rich and rare phraseology;—ancient medals, obscure coins, and Spanish pieces of eight.[1] They are very curious to inspect; but I myself would neither offer nor take them in the course of exchange. A sprinkling of archaisms is not amiss; but a tissue of obsolete expressions is more fit *for keep than wear*. . . .

It is as easy to write a gaudy style without ideas, as it is to spread a pallet of showy colours, or to smear in a flaunting transparency. 'What do you read?'—'Words, words, words.'—'What is the matter?'—'*Nothing*,' it might be answered. The florid style is the reverse of the familiar. The last is employed as an unvarnished medium to convey ideas; the first is resorted to as a spangled veil to conceal the want of them. When there is nothing to be set down but words, it costs little to have them fine. . . .

Keep to your sounding generalities, your tinkling phrases, and all will be well.[2] Swell out an unmeaning truism to a

[1] Metaphor. "A metaphor is merely a condensed simile, a double figure, inasmuch as you not only compare things different in kind but assert identity when you mean only partial likeness." (Minto.)

[2] Irony. "Irony is understood either from the mode of delivery or from the character of the speaker, upon the nature of the subject; for if any of these be at variance with the words, it is apparent that the intention is different from the expression." (Quintilian.)

perfect tympany of style. A thought, a distinction is the rock on which all this brittle cargo of verbiage splits at once.[1] Such writers have merely *verbal* imaginations, that retain nothing but words. Or their puny thoughts have dragon-wings, all green and gold.[1] They soar far above the vulgar failing of the *Sermo humi obrepens*—their most ordinary speech is never short of an hyperbole, splendid, imposing, vague, incomprehensible, magniloquent, a cento of sounding common-places. If some of us, whose 'ambition is more lowly,' pry a little too narrowly into nooks and corners to pick up a number of 'unconsidered trifles,' they never once direct their eyes or lift their hands to seize on any but the most gorgeous, tarnished, threadbare patch-work set of phrases, the left-off finery of poetic extravagance, transmitted down through successive generations of barren pretenders. . . .

Hazlitt's Central Idea is immediately evident; it is, that Familiar Style is the best. He begins by defining what he means by Familiar Style; and he does so, by first eliminating false notions on the subject, and then setting forth what he conceives to be the true method of writing. His argument is illustrated by a reference to the manner of Dr. Johnson, whose influence dominated the style of the prose writers of the last half of the eighteenth century; and which was still a force, in Hazlitt's time. In the course of the essay, he says nearly all that need be said, on the art of familiar writing; and his own example is not less valuable than his advice. If you study the development of the Argument, you will see that he has the whole plan clearly in his own mind, before he begins to write; he does not weary the reader with an account of the process by which he arrived at his conclusions; but, he states the conclusions, as clearly as

[1] Metaphor.

possible. The material of the essay has, as it were, been strained through the sieve of his mind; he throws away the sediment, and retains the clear liquid. It is for this reason, that the study of Hazlitt is so useful.

We find, then, that Hazlitt's conclusions, so far as they go, accord with those at which we arrived in the course of our preliminary investigation, in so far as the advantage of Familiar Style is concerned; we have gained a clearer insight into the subject by our study of the essay; upon which we can draw, further, for quotations. But, we find that Hazlitt leaves on one side the disadvantage, which we noted—a large exception.

Now let us bring together, revise and complete our notes, with the additional information gained from Hazlitt.

Style is nothing else but a mode of expression. Differences of expression—or style—arise from differences of temperament. '*Le style, c'est l'homme même!*' Advantage and disadvantage of Familiar Style. Compare Hazlitt. Advantage. Object of expression, to convey meaning. Experience teaches us various modes of expression, used by writers. Quote instances, with short extracts from some of authors enumerated. That which best fulfils object of expression, familiar style; because author adapts expression therein to capacity of reader. Disadvantage. But, after all, choice in the matter of expression limited. For, although (as Hazlitt points out) some write in unfamiliar—not necessarily obscure—mode, owing to peculiarity of temperament, leading them to regard unfamiliarity of phrase as chief object of expression, and some are able to adapt without sacrifice; others, removed from readers by difference of temperament, cannot become familiar without sacrifice of meaning; a point which Hazlitt does not raise. Conclusion of matter: experience tells us that much of the greatest

work known by its simplicity ; which, allowing for certain margin of intelligence in reader, comes very near to what we mean by Familiar Style.

Now we come to the selection of the Central Idea. Is not the idea which, upon consideration of our material, instantly suggests itself, that of the Advisability of Cultivating a Familiar Style ?

Now, you may either draft your essay, or articulate the material into the principal divisions and paragraphs. Adopt the method which you find the easiest. Then begin to write.

IV

SOMETHING SEEN (1)

WHAT is the meaning of the title? Something seen —that is, *observed*—by you; and as the object of an essay is to explain something, you are to make clear that —whatever it is—which you have seen, to your reader; so clear, that he will have as plain a picture in his mind of what the thing in question is, as if he had seen it himself. But what (you ask) should you choose? Well, referring for a moment to our example, the description of the Monotype Printing Machine by the late Mr. G. W. Steevens (*Things Seen*), you will find that this particular thing seen, is an extremely ingenious mechanical invention; a most difficult thing so to describe, as to convey a definite notion to the mind of the reader.

Taking, then, some mechanical invention as our subject, we find it to be a Concrete subject; a thing to be dealt with in the light of direct observation and practical experience. And first of all, we are to inquire, what is a Machine? Primarily, a thing of working parts, artificially set in motion, contrived by man to help him in his work; or, as the dictionary puts it:—'Any combination of inanimate mechanism for utilising or applying power.' The origins of the word signify plan or contriv-

ance. Having arrived at this definition, let us examine it, in order to discover the Idea behind the Thing, and the relations existing between them. As we have already learned in Example II., it is our first business, when we are investigating the nature of a subject, to find the Idea behind the Thing. What is the idea behind a thing which man has contrived, invented, made, in order that it should help him in his work? Surely, the extension of man's power. In order to perceive clearly how far man's power is extended by machinery, what inquiry do we make? We inquire, What is the scope of man's power, without machinery? His range of power would be exactly that of a savage: a savage without bow and arrows, weapons and implements; which are merely extensions of the power of his naked hands to catch and slay and make; and without the means of producing fire. He would be, in fact, on the level of the brutes; which (we are told) is precisely what he prehistorically was. And what follows? That man emerges from his original condition of barbarism, by means of his power to invent machinery; which extends his powers. The cave-dweller who first made a stone axe, held a considerable advantage over his fellows; until they also learned the trick; and the whole tribe—or, to be more exact, the survivors thereof—had made one step towards civilisation. We are still making steps; and the first axe-man is brother to the inventor of the long-range gun; which is only the power to strike a blow at a much safer distance, and a great deal harder. And in the same way, the first savage who scratched symbols on a rock-face or a piece of bone, began the process which is not yet ended, and of which the invention of the Monotype printing machine is the latest development.

Machinery, then, is extended power. That seems clear. Is there anything left obscure, with regard to the

Idea? Is not the exact relation between the man and the machine, still undefined? What is the relation, exactly? Is it not the relation of creator to created? And what is a creator? To create, is to cause to be. How does man cause a machine to be? He conceives the plan of it, the abstract, immaterial form in his brain, and proceeds to give it concrete, material form and body. If then, it originated in his brain, it must be a part of himself, thrown off, and assuming a separate shape. So that the relation of man to a machine, is the relation of one part of himself, to another part. Hence, the Idea of a machine, is that of a part of man's nature, thrown off, embodied separately,[1] for the purpose of extending his powers. What is the reflection that naturally arises? That, in the tiny organism of the brain, residing perhaps in almost invisible particles, are contained infinite possibilities, capable of indefinite expansions and combinations. Man, in a word, is a microcosm.[2]

Notes. A Machine is a thing of working parts, artificially set in motion, contrived by man to help him in his work; in other words, a contrivance by means of which man enlarges the scope of his power. Man without machinery of any sort, would be—and indeed was—upon the level of the brutes. First elementary machine, first step towards civilisation. The stone axe has been evolved into the long-range gun; the hieroglyphic scratched on rock or bone, into the Monotype printing machine. Hence, relation of man to machine, that of creator to created; man having, out of himself, made a

[1] See Mr. Kipling's stories, 'The Ship that Found Herself,' and '·007' (*The Day's Work*); and Mr. Henley's 'A Song of Speed' (David Nutt, London. 1903).

[2] An organic being is a microcosm—a little universe, formed of a host of self-propagating organisms, inconceivably minute and numerous as the stars in heaven. (Darwin.)

new thing. Man, a continent of infinite possibilities, is the microcosm, the little world within the greater universe.

What is the Central Idea which your treatment of your subject will serve to illustrate? The Idea which lies behind all machinery:—The Extension of Man's Power, and his relation, which is that of creator to created, to the thing which extends it.

Now, you are to choose the particular machine which you are going to explain. It does not much matter what it is; locomotive engine, motor-car, gas-engine, dynamo, hydraulic lift, marine engine, typewriter—most people are ignorant of the details of the workings of all alike. I will wager that you, for instance, have no clear idea in your mind of the principle and method of that humble, necessary machine, the kitchen boiler and its auxiliary tanks, which supply hot water to the house you live in. Having made your choice, read the description of 'The Monotype,' by G. W. Steevens (*Things Seen*), in order to see how a practised writer deals with the same kind of subject. If you cannot obtain the book, the following extracts will serve your need.

EXAMPLE IV

THE MONOTYPE

G. W. STEEVENS (1869-1900)

THINGS SEEN

It is so complete and provident, foreseeing every difficulty and surmounting it, aware of every advantage and seizing it, that you can hardly help feeling it to be a portent, inex-

plicable, born out of season, without father or mother, or beginning of days.[1]

Yet, though its inventor is a statistician, who came upon it not through the study of printing, but in the devising of calculating machines, the monotype, like every seeming prodigy, is the issue of a long development, the offspring of a hundred ancestors.[1] Revolution is the child of evolution in printing as everywhere else.

The machine looks modest, and, to anybody capable of understanding machines, very simple. It stands perhaps 4 feet high, it is 3 feet 8 inches long by 3 feet broad, and it weighs only 900 lb. It requires very little power to drive it. The buzz of its driving-belt and the click, click of the work it is doing hardly makes itself (*sic*) heard at your ear above the clatter of Leadenhall Street. Altogether it is one of the least ostentatious machines that ever made a revolution. But if you look at it closer and realise what it is doing, that machine is one of the greatest marvels of all the marvellous history of machinery, the crown of over five centuries' development in the most vital of all civilising arts. The machine is casting and setting type all by itself—setting it, too, more regularly, more cleanly, more cheaply, and more untiringly than written words have ever been set before.

Click, click, click ; and with each click a fire-new, shining letter slides out into its place in a line of print. Click, click, click, till a line is finished ; the line slides up into its place in a column, and the machine, before you have finished watching the line fall in, has pushed out nearly half the next. Nobody is touching it—nobody telling it what to say. It just goes on clicking out words and words, thoughts and thoughts. It is the most human of all machines and the most inhuman. It is human in its seemingly self-suggested

[1] Examples of the Periodic sentence (though loosely constructed), in which the meaning remains suspended till the whole is finished, for the sake of emphasis. It is an inversion of the common structure of English speech, in which phrases and clauses follow the words which they qualify.

intelligence, inhuman in its deliberate yet unresting precision. Unprompted and unchecked, it might be clicking out life-giving truth or devilish corruption, and clicking it out for ever.

Its full name is the Lanston monotype machine; its familiars call it briefly the monotype. It is almost a relief—so much you are hypnotised by the apparent spontaneity of the thing—to learn that it is not saying just what it likes; that it is, after all, like other machines, man's servant. There is a paper roll being unwound and re-wound on the top of it, punched with holes in various positions like the drum of a musical box, which is telling it what to say. There is a kind of tank where from time to time it must be fed with metal to cast its types from. But within these limitations its activity is only bounded by the time required for each type to cool; give it words to set and metal to set them with, and it will go on unaided till you like to stop it.

To get a vague idea of its working you must begin with the perforated roll. There is a keen-faced, clean-shaven young man in spectacles working what appears to be a typewriter in one corner of the room: that is the captain of the setting machine, and the man is the captain of that.[1] The two parts make really one machine, and yet the one is perfectly independent in place or time of the other.

The machine's master begins by setting an index: the index fixes the length of the line required. Then he begins playing on the keys as with a typewriter; only each key, instead of writing a letter, punches two round holes in the roll. So he taps letter after letter till he has punched a word; then he taps a space and on to the next word. Presently, when he is coming to the end of a line, a bell rings. You notice a semi-circular dial, just above the bank of keys, with a pointer travelling across it. The bell means

[1] Obscure collocation. Read:—'working, in one corner of the room, what appears to be a typewriter; which is the captain of the setting machine, whose captain is the man.'

this : the line has now progressed so far that another syllable would fill it too full. You must now 'justify,' as printers call it—that is, equalise the space between the words of the line. The monotype's method of doing this is, perhaps, the most beautiful of all its beauties. There is a registering scale which has been following all the movements of the operator : it now reveals on the dial, first, how much space is over, to be divided equally among the spaces between the words ; and second, the number of spaces between the words among which the residuary space is to be divided. Say there is one-tenth of an inch over and there are ten spaces : an addition of one-hundredth of an inch will justify the line. To do such a thing by hand means time and distraction of attention, and probably inaccuracy after all ; to the monotype it is child's play. The operator simply taps a key which punches yet another hole in the ribbon. When the ribbon comes to control the setting machine, that hole ensures that the word-spaces shall be just one-hundredth above normal size, and the line will be justified with absolute mathematical exactness. When the ribbon is punched full it is lifted off the key-board and fixed on to the casting and setting machine. The holes in it correspond mathematically with a set of dies comprising all the characters and symbols used in type-setting. These are carried in a case mounted on a compound slide, the parts of which move at right angles. Air is shot through these holes by a pneumatic tube, and the force brings the die required under a jet of molten metal. The metal is forced into the mould, the type is cast and shot out into the galley. The whole thing comes out hind part before and upside down ; the justifying holes at the ends of each line are thus the first to come under the observation of the machine, which casts all the space-types of the lines accordingly. If there is a mistake as to the length of the line, the monotype refuses. It stops dead ; the minder puts the error right, and the sagacious creature[1] starts on again. When the whole galley is set, a proof is pulled and corrected

[1] Personification.

in the ordinary way ; each type is an individual, so there is no need of re-casting. When the type is done with it can either be retained for use, being every bit as good as foundry type, or melted up and used over again. By reason of its facilities for changing the measure of lines, and its accuracy of justification, the monotype can set tabular matter and over-run illustrations better than this can be done by hand. It is the only machine which can make full use of capitals and italics as supplied in a full fount of type.¶ Other machines can produce but 100 characters with a hundred different movements : it can produce 225 with thirty. To cut technicalities, the monotype can do everything that printing can ask. It is the child of evolution. Since very early in the century machinery has fought the compositor ; and though the man has kept his head up hitherto, like the man he is, it was certain that in the end he must go down. Not down altogether, of course, but down as a hand-compositor : a man's a man, and will earn his bread whether he trims sails or stokes furnaces, whether he picks types out of a box into a stick or sits on a seat and hits keys . . .

The writer begins by giving his first impression ; that which struck him when he first saw the machine, and which aroused his curiosity. The preliminary work of analysis, which you have just performed, has been done in the mind of the writer, before he begins. He does not give you the steps of the investigation ; it is not necessary that he should ; but, you know that he has completed the process, by the reflection to which his first glance at the subject gives rise. A first impression has a unique value, because it can never occur again ; because it often carries suggestions which are themselves of a unique value ; and because it often provokes curiosity, a desire to know more. Hence, if you begin by giving the reader a first impression which has aroused your own curiosity, you have every opportunity of awaking his curiosity

also. In other words, his interest will be aroused in what you have written, because it is interesting. What we call interest in a book, is that quality in it which continually provokes and stimulates and feeds curiosity; and curiosity is the natural appetite of the mind, which, when you write, you set out to gratify.

The Introduction, then, which is contained in the first paragraph, is the record of a first impression. Follows, a reflection upon the Introduction, which serves as the Transition to the Argument. The Argument begins by giving—what the reader will naturally demand at first—a general idea of the aspect of the thing in action (from 'The machine looks modest,' to 'clicking it out for ever'). The aspect of the thing naturally provokes a further curiosity to know its working in detail; and accordingly, the writer proceeds to give a clear, pictorial description. He knows that a perfectly accurate description is only attainable by means of drawing, by making either picture or diagram; which tells exactly, either what the thing described looks like, or what is its shape. For, words can at best convey no more than a 'vague idea'; and they can only convey the vague idea, by likening the unknown to the known; by calling up in the reader's mind the image of something with which he is already acquainted, and so giving him a kind of adjustable picture in his mind, of something he has never seen. 'There is a paper roll . . . like the drum of a musical box' . . . 'a kind of tank' . . . 'what appears to be a typewriter' . . . these are not exact technical descriptions, which would be useless to one who was not a mechanician, and who therefore had not a set of corresponding technical pictures already in his mind. They are word-pictures, for the benefit of the unlearned, which anyone of ordinary intelligence can understand. But, the very fact of the description being addressed to

persons without special knowledge, must limit its scope. You can give them a general idea—no more. Thus, when the writer comes to describe the casting of the metal type, he does not attempt more than a broad outline of the process . . . 'air is shot through these holes by pneumatic tube, and the force brings the die required under a jet of molten metal. The metal is forced into the mould, the type is cast and shot out into the galley' . . .

The Argument, having made clear what the machine is like, and what is its action, states a few plain facts, summarising the result of its action (from 'When the type is done with,' to 'it can produce 225 with thirty'). Then comes the Transition to the Conclusion; 'To cut technicalities, the monotype can do everything that printing can ask'; and the Conclusion, repeating the reflection, upon the Introduction—'It is the child of evolution'—and superadding a new reflection, concerning the relation of the printing-man to the printing-machine. (The complete essay, at this point, which I have called the Conclusion, goes back on its course, and gives a historical account of the earlier machines, out of which the Monotype was evolved.) The writer's Central Idea is manifest from the outset: The Machine as the Child of Evolution. This is artfully suggested to the reader in what I have called his Introduction and Conclusion; and completely developed in the last half of the essay, which I have not quoted. The Style is eminently Familiar. It is concise, vivid, and occasionally careless.

V

SOMETHING SEEN (2)

AGAIN, the title means something which, having been carefully observed and noted by you, is made clear to your reader. But here, instead of selecting a subject with which any ordinary intelligence is capable of dealing, by merely taking sufficient pains to examine it, we are to select a subject which appeals to the mind in a different way: a subject which presents, perhaps, a simple and common aspect to the eye; and whose full significance is only to be discovered by a deliberate act of the imagination. What is imagination? It is the power of the mind to image, or picture, to itself that which has been, or that which might be. But here, a difficulty is presented; for, one person differs from another, both in the degree and in the kind of the imagination with which everyone is in some measure endowed. In other words, some people have a stronger power of imagination than others; and some are better able to picture certain things to themselves, than certain other things. So that, in choosing your subject, you would naturally choose something which — in the common phrase—appeals to your imagination; that is, something in which you take an interest; which seems to you, personally, to be in some way attractive, or picturesque.

For the sake of convenience, we will, as before, select the same subject as that which is treated in the very remarkable Example, quoted from the writings of Mr. Ruskin ; the method employed in dealing with it being applicable to any other subject of the same kind.

A Sea Boat : the words call up some picture of a bluff, broad-beamed craft, hauled up high and dry on the beach, amid a litter of lobster-pots, rusty chains, tarred ropes, oars, and such gear ; or rocking gently at anchor, within some pier-encircled harbour, or landlocked bay. A sea boat—everyone has a general notion, at least, what a sea boat is like. To describe one, you would give the portrait of a boat which you know ; and you would delineate that portrait, by noting those little peculiarities that serve to distinguish it from other boats of the same class. Begin by so doing ; and thus far, your subject is Concrete. Now, what next? We are to find the Idea behi..d the Thing. What is the Idea of which your boat is the expression? First of all, it is a machine : an extension of man's power, by means of which he can travel through an element which is contrary to his nature. Pursue the definition until you have tracked its meaning home. (You see, at this point, that the subject is both Abstract and Concrete ; for, while we are to investigate and make clear the Idea behind the Thing, we are to illustrate the argument from experience.) Now, to travel through an element which is contrary to the nature of a man, by means of a machine, is to remove everything, except that invention (and such brief power of keeping himself alive as he may possess), that intervenes between himself and immediate death. Consider for a moment what death is : a difficult matter, for the mind is apt to slip aside from the contemplation of a subject which is familiar and simple, and which is yet at the same time

terrible and strange and mysterious. But ask yourself, what exactly would it mean, were the boat to sink under you? Reflect upon the answer. And then turn to observe what kind of an invention is this, which is hourly trusted with so dear a cargo; and you remark, with a dull emotion that would be surprise, were the object less familiar, that the sea boat is a thing slight as a sea-shell; built of thin laths of wood nailed together; propelled by oars, or carried forward by wind and sails, and in each case momently poised amid the opposing forces of wind and wave and skill of steersman, above the very abyss of death. Yet, it is found sufficient. And you note that the business of travel by water, and its attendant industries, are accompanied by some of the most beautiful aspects and incidents in nature. For the mariner constantly beholds the mutable splendours of the sea and sky; sunrise and sunset and the vast hollow of the night heavens, reflected in the changing form of waves upon the deep waters; beauty of tempest, serenity of calm; the stained and weed-grown harbour with its wood of masts or its lone sea-beach; the fishing-village sheltering under the hill, its lighted windows shining at nightfall; and the sea boat, herself man's most beautiful device, graceful as a bird, moving like a wave of the sea. . . . These are but the most general suggestions; you must make your own picture, with your own details.

Still investigating the subject, you will be led to consider how the sea boat, itself evolved from the coracle—the boat made of skins stretched over withies—and from the canoe hollowed by fire from a log, became by degrees the small ship with a deck in bows and stern; then a larger ship, decked fore and aft; then the three-decker; and so on, to the giant six-mast cargo-boats of to-day, and—man's ultimate defiance of the power of the sea—the huge sea-castles, framed of steel,

and driven forth by steam upon his errands, careless of wind and wave.

Notes:—Description of sea boat; method of description employed, to note minute peculiarities which distinguish it from other boats of same kind. Machine in the sense of extension of man's power. Invention to enable him to travel through element contrary to his nature. And to gain his livelihood from it. In so doing, man takes away everything save the invention in question between himself and death. Death—whatever else it may be—is the great mysterious event that ends man's existence as man. Extraordinary frailty and yet sufficiency of sea boat, poised above abyss amid opposing forces of wind and wave and skill of boatman. Picturesque aspects of nature and of man's handiwork incidental to the business, generally and in detail. Evolution of sea boat from earlier forms of water-conveyance, into great ships.

Central Idea:—The beauty of the sea boat, considered as the means by which man travels and earns his bread, at the imminent and continual risk of death.

Before beginning to write, read Mr. Ruskin's wonderful essay. It has the force of poetry, though it happens to be presented in prose instead of in verse.

EXAMPLE V

SOMETHING SEEN (2)—A SEA BOAT

JOHN RUSKIN (1819-1900)

HARBOURS OF ENGLAND

Of all things, living or lifeless, upon this strange earth, there is but one which, having reached the mid-term of appointed human endurance on it, I still regard with un-

mitigated amazement.[1] I know, indeed, that all around me is wonderful; but I cannot answer it with wonder: a dark veil with the foolish words, Nature of Things, upon it casts its deadening folds between me and their dazzling strangeness. Flowers open, and stars rise, and it seems to me they could have done no less. The mystery of distant mountain-blue only makes me reflect that the earth is of necessity mountainous; the sea wave breaks at my feet, and I do not see how it should have remained unbroken. But one object there is still, which I never pass without the renewed wonder of childhood, and that is the bow of a boat. Not of a racing-wherry, or revenue cutter, or clipper-yacht, but the blunt head of a common bluff, undecked sea-boat, lying aside in its furrow of beach sand. The sum of navigation is in that. You may magnify it or decorate it as you will; you do not add to the wonder of it. Lengthen it into hatchet-like edge of iron, strengthen it with complex tracery of ribs of oak, carve it and gild it till a column of light moves beneath it on the sea, you have made no more of it than it was at first. That rude simplicity of bent plank, that can breast its way through the death that is in the deep sea, has in it the soul of shipping. Beyond this, we may have more work, more men, more money; we cannot have more miracle.

For there is first an infinite strangeness in the perfection of the thing as work of human hands. I know nothing else that man does which is perfect, but that. All his other doings have some sign of weakness, affectation, or ignorance in them. They are over-finished, or under-finished; they do not quite answer their end, or they show a mean vanity in answering it too well.

But the boat's bow is naïvely perfect; complete without an effort. The man who made it knew not that he was making anything beautiful as he bent its planks into those mysterious ever-changing curves. It grows under his hands into the image of a sea-shell, the seal, as it were, of the flow-

[1] Periodic Introductory sentence.

ing of the great tides and streams of ocean stamped on its delicate rounding.[1] He leaves it when all is done, without a boast. It is simple work, but it will keep out water, and every plank, thenceforward, is a fate, and has men's lives wreathed in the knots of it, as the cloth-yard shaft had their deaths in its plumes.[1]

Then, also, it is wonderful, on account of the greatness of the thing accomplished. No other work of human hands ever gained so much. Steam-engines and telegraphs, indeed, help us to fetch and carry, and talk; they lift weights for us, and bring messages with less trouble than would have been needed otherwise; this saving of trouble, however, does not constitute a new faculty, it only enhances the powers we already possess. But in that bow of the boat is the gift of another world. Without it, what prison wall would be so strong as that white and wailing fringe of sea? What maimed creatures, were we all chained to our rocks, Andromeda-like, or wandering by the endless shores, wasting our incommunicable strength, and pining in hopeless watch of unconquerable waves! The nails that fasten together the planks of the boat's bow are the rivets of the fellowship of the world. Their iron does more than draw lightning out of heaven, it leads love round the earth.

Then, also, it is wonderful on account of the greatness of the enemy that it does battle with. To lift dead weight, to overcome length of languid space, to multiply or systematize a given force, this we may see done by the bar, or beam, or wheel, without wonder. But to war with that living fury of waters, to bare its breast, moment after moment, against the unwearied enmity of ocean; the subtle, fitful, implacable smiting of the black waves, provoking each other on endlessly, all the infinite march of the Atlantic rolling on behind them to their help, and still to strike them back into a wreath of smoke and futile foam, and win its way against them, and keep its charge of life from

[1] Admirable examples of the use of simile.

them.[1] Does any other soulless thing do as much as this? . . .

Ruskin's Central Idea is the perfection of the sea boat, considered as a means to an end; and considering also the strange and beautiful simplicity of the means, and the immediate and tremendous penalty of their failure. That penalty—death—is ever present; every time a boat is launched, 'the death that is in the deep sea' lurks as imminent as it did when man first tempted fortune. Perhaps that is why, as Ruskin says, of all created things, the bow of the 'common bluff undecked sea-boat' remains ever wonderful.

Thus, in his Introduction, the author isolates his subject from all else, by the statement of the single circumstance of its relation to life and death. The Argument illustrates, point by point, the central idea. Note that Ruskin carries further the idea of the machine as increasing man's power; in this instance, the increase of power gives him the command of a whole new world . . . 'this saving of trouble, however, does not constitute a new faculty, it only enhances the powers we already possess. But in that bow of the boat is the gift of another world.' Note also the extraordinary picturesque quality of the writing; so magical is the writer's power of imagination, that everything he touches starts into life—into a vivid picture—under his pen. 'The common, bluff, undecked sea-boat, *lying aside in its furrow of beach-sand.*' He might have written 'drawn up on the beach,' but that would not have presented so intimate a picture. '*Hatchet-like* edge of iron' . . . 'carve it and gild it *till a column of light moves beneath it on the sea*' . . . 'men's lives *wreathed in the knots of it*, as the cloth-yard shaft had

[1] Personification.

their deaths in its plumes' . . . 'the white and wailing fringe of sea' . . . 'a wreath of smoke and futile foam' —these phrases, and such as these, are the inspirations of a man who sees what he is describing, clear and vivid before him as pictures. It is this power of seeing that we are to acquire; the phrases will follow of themselves.

VI

OF FRIENDSHIP

WHAT is Friendship? The word is derived from the Anglo-Saxon *freōn*, love. In what, then, does it differ from love? It is not a natural affection, such as the love that subsists between members of a family; nor does it arise from the attraction of sex, which gives birth to the passionate affection of the man for the woman, and the woman for the man. Rather is it that kind of mutual affection, esteem, regard, which is based on kindred sympathies and like qualities; and which result in an interchange of kind offices.

Hence it is partly intellectual, having reason for its groundwork; whereas love may exist and flourish with little or no intellectual basis, and in defiance of reason. Being grounded in reason, friendship has little to do with passion; and, having little to do with passion, it does not seek, as passion seeks, the gratification of possession, but finds its satisfaction in the bestowal of benefits.

We have, then, for our subject: That kind of mutual affection, which, being based on kindred sympathies and like qualities, is partly intellectual, and has its groundwork in reason; hence, it has little to do with passion; and finds its satisfaction in an interchange of kind offices.

The Subject is obviously an Abstract subject. Therefore we begin by the definition of its nature, at which we arrive by investigation conducted by question and answer. How shall we obtain an insight into its nature? How do we obtain an insight into the nature of anything? By taking it to pieces—analysing it. But, is there not a difficulty here? For, if the thing under consideration be a Force—something which cannot be conceived to exist at all save in sense of Action, or Motion—the method does not seem to apply. And friendship is a spiritual force. How, then, are we to discover the real nature of a force? You say, by observing it in action; and you are so far right. But, if you pursue the reflection a little farther, you will see that the answer should be, By noting the results of its action. Here, however, we are brought to pause, because a further question is suggested: What sets the force in motion? Why, when two persons have the same sympathies, and are gifted with like qualities, should this mysterious affection, or force, of friendship, be generated? At first sight, there seems no answer. But, upon consideration, we may trace the operation of the mysterious law of harmony, which ordains that a certain emotion, or force, be generated in the soul, whenever it perceives beauty. This emotion is called love, and its immediate result is happiness. And the force we have under consideration, is one form of love; the particular kind of emotion which arises in the soul, when it perceives a particular kind of beauty in another. Hence, as the saying goes, a man is known by his friends. He chooses his friends for qualities which he recognises and appreciates, because he himself possesses them. Like to like is the rule of life.

Now, we return to our original inquiry: What are

the Results of Friendship? What, judging by experience, is the first and chief result of a sincere friendship between two persons? We are assuming that each has found something in the other to admire, and that each bears the other an active affection. Surely, experience tells us that the first and chief result is happiness. And if that be so, what may we deduce with regard to man's nature? That, since friendship results in happiness, and happiness is the result of the operation of the law of harmony, man's nature is designed for the exercise of friendship. In a word, he is a social being. To state the proposition negatively:—Man should not live a solitary existence, which is contrary to nature, and which will therefore result in unhappiness.

What are the further results of friendship? The interchange of benefits. What kind of benefits? First, the exchange and discussion of ideas, in that kind of talk which is only possible between friends. Next, the mutual rendering of services. There is always an interchange—why? Because, although the one friend has no thought of recompense in what he does, he is always willing to receive something again, because he would not burden the other with an obligation. At the same time, there is in true friendship no reckoning of obligation, or balancing of accounts. What kind of services, then, does one friend render to another? The service of sympathy, whereby one receives benefit, in the mere unburdening of the heart to another; the service of counsel, for a friend may sometimes know what is best to be done in a given difficulty, because he is able to take an impartial point of view, and because—what is often more valuable—his advice is a steadying influence; and the service of alliance, whereby more than one working together towards a common object are able to achieve that which one alone were unable to accomplish.

'In true friendship, it is a generall and universall heat,' says Montaigne, 'and equally tempered, a constant and settled heat, all pleasure and smoothness . . . enjoyed according as it is desired, it is neither bred, nor nourished, nor increaseth but in jouissance, as being spirituall, and the minde being refined by use custom.'

You may instance examples (selected from the literature with which you are acquainted) such as those of David and Jonathan, of Antonio and Bassanio, of Hamlet and Horatio.

Notes. Friendship, from A.S. *freōn*. Mutual affection based on kindred sympathies and like qualities; distinguished from natural affection and attraction of sex; intellectual; finds satisfaction in bestowal of benefits. An emotion arising from perception of beauty, in accordance with law of harmony. Hence, a spiritual Force. Results:—first, Happiness. Conversely, solitude as contrary to nature, results in unhappiness. Man a social being. Further results, interchange of benefits and services; such interchange being free from all taint of bargain or recompense. Discussion of ideas; sympathy; counsel; and alliance. *Cf.* Montaigne; and quote instances.

Central Idea. Let us say, Friendship as forming the chief happiness of life. Before proceeding further, let us see what Lord Bacon has written on the subject. The greater part of his essay is quoted below.

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EXAMPLE VI

OF FRIENDSHIP

FRANCIS BACON (1561-1626)

ESSAYS. XXVII

It had been hard for him that spake it to have put more truth and untruth together in few words, than in that speech, 'Whosoever is delighted in solitude is either a wild beast or a god.' For it is most true that a natural and secret hatred and aversation towards society in any man, hath somewhat of the savage beast; but it is most untrue that it should have any character at all of the divine nature; except it proceed, not out of a pleasure in solitude, but out of a love and desire to sequester a man's self for a higher conversation: such as is found to have been falsely and feignedly in some of the heathen; as Epimenides the Candian, Numa the Roman, Empedocles the Sicilian, and Apollonius of Tyana; and truly and really in divers of the ancient hermits and holy fathers of the church.[1] But little do men perceive what solitude is, and how for it extendeth. For a crowd is not company; and faces are but a gallery of pictures; and talk but a tinkling cymbal, where there is no love. The Latin adage meeteth with it a little: *Magna civitas, magna solitudo*;[2] because in a great town friends are scattered; so that there is not that fellowship, for the most part, which is in less neighbourhoods. But we may go further, and affirm most truly that it is a mere and miserable solitude to want true friends; without which the world is but a wilderness; and even in this sense also of solitude, whosoever in the frame of his nature and affections is unfit for friendship, he taketh it of the beast, and not from humanity.

[1] A long sentence, according to modern usage, which would perhaps adapt it into three sentences; the first ending at 'beast,' the second at 'conversation.'

[2] A great city is a great desert.

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man's self; and there is no such remedy against flattery of a man's self, as the liberty of a friend. Counsel is of two sorts; the one concerning manners, the other concerning business. For the first, the best preservative to keep the mind in health is the faithful admonition of a friend. The calling of a man's self to a strict account is a medicine, sometime, too piercing and corrosive. Reading good books of morality is a little flat and dead. Observing our faults in others is sometimes improper[1] for our case. But the best receipt (best, I say, to work, and best to take)[2] is the admonition of a friend. . . . But to enumerate these things were endless; I have given the rule, where a man cannot fitly play his own part; if he have not a friend, he may quit the stage.

In his Introduction, Bacon defines the contrary to friendship, which is solitude. He marks an exception, and shows how far solitude 'extendeth.' Solitude, in a word, exists wherever 'there is no love'; in a crowd as in a desert. He makes, as it were, a map of life, and divides it into two parts, one representing Solitude, the other Friendship. Solitude being disposed of, we can devote our whole attention to the province of Friendship.

His Argument (beginning 'A principal fruit of friendship') opens directly with a description of the results—the 'fruits'—of friendship. He has gone through the preliminary analysis of the nature of his subject, before he began to write. He describes, not the steps of the analysis itself but, the results of that analysis. Being a man of great intellect and a practised writer, he is able to do this; whereas you, as a beginner, must be content at present to give all the steps of the process, as well as the result.

[1] Inappropriate to.
[2] Example of use of qualifying clause in bracket.

Bacon's 'principal fruits' are in the main the same as your own. You have Discussion of Ideas and Counsel (which may be classed as one), Sympathy, and Alliance. Bacon has 'peace in the affections,' answering to Sympathy; 'support of the judgment,' answering to Discussion of Ideas and Counsel; and 'bearing a part in all actions and occasions,' answering to Alliance. He illustrates his Argument by adages (*Magna civitas, magna solitudo; Cor ne edito, etc.*), by quotations, and by many instances, drawn from what he would have called 'the antients'—the classic authors. Many of these learned instances are contained in the passages which are not quoted here; you will find them in the book itself.

His writing is highly metaphorical; that is to say, he likens the subject in hand to something familiar to the reader, and then speaks of the subject as though it actually were that something. For instance, in the beginning of the Argument, the emotions of the heart are likened to certain affections of the body, and are spoken of in the same terms: 'the fulness and swellings of the heart.' The metaphor is immediately 'expanded' (as the grammarians call it) into the simile, which explains the metaphor, and makes the meaning doubly clear. 'We know diseases of stoppings and suffocations are the most dangerous in the body; and it is not much otherwise in the mind.' In other words, the mind in certain conditions is like the body; that is the Simile, from *similis*, like. And he goes on to show that, just as you take medicines for the one, so must you take medicine for the other; which remedy, in this case, is the sympathy of a friend. So in the description of the 'second fruit of friendship,' which 'maketh daylight in the understanding, out of darkness.' Here the metaphor employed is that of the dawn, scattering the

darkness of night; it is so plain, that the author does not expand it into the simile. These two instances should suffice to give you an insight into the manner of Bacon's splendid style; and to fix in your minds, once for all, what is a metaphor and what a simile.

The Conclusion, which lies in the last sentence, is ingeniously turned, so as to round off the last paragraph, and at the same time, the whole essay. The last half of the sentence—'if he have not a friend, he may quit the stage'—is the conclusion of the whole matter; and contains the Central Idea, which may be expressed as the Necessity of Friendship.

Note the close reasoning and the terse diction. No word is superfluous; every word tells. You cannot do better than learn by heart such sentences as:—'A crowd is not company; and faces are but a gallery of pictures; and talk but a tinkling cymbal, where there is no love'; 'Friendship maketh indeed a fair day in the affections, from storm and tempests'; 'The best receipt (best, I say, to work, and best to take) is the admonition of a friend.'

The whole Example is to be used, not imitated. You may learn from it a certain method of expression, the metaphorical; certain definite information; and certain words and phrases which are useful and beautiful in themselves. But, you are not to write like Bacon. You are to learn to write like yourself.

VII

AN HISTORICAL PORTRAIT

THIS is a Concrete Subject, whose treatment depends upon your knowledge of an epoch in history. What is meant by the portrait of an historical personage? Not the outward aspect of the man—though that, in so far as it is known, might be included—but the delineation of his Character. How are you to delineate character? The question is best answered by another: How does character reveal itself in life? By Action, and by action alone; the word action being taken, in its widest sense, to include everything which is done by the man; his words, his gestures, his endurance of suffering, his deeds, his influence, whether exercised consciously or unconsciously, upon others. So that you are to delineate character by recounting actions which illustrate character. But, every man's action necessarily affects others; in the case of an historical personage, whose field of action was large, his action affected the whole generation in which he lived. And that generation is itself composed of men of action; whose acts would, in their turn, affect the character and fortunes of the personage in question. From which we infer—what? That his portrait, in order to be intelligible, must include some picture of the times in which he

tion of those circumstances which would most severely test the Roman virtue of fortitude; in which (says the author) Milton excelled. (That he did so excel—that he was, as Macaulay states, innocent of despondency and asperity, may well be called in question by the student. But the inquiry does not concern the literary merit of the example.) In what may be called his Introduction—for, in an extract from a complete essay, the Introduction cannot be clearly marked—the author compares Milton with Dante; affording, to those who are acquainted with the history of the Italian poet, a powerful illustration of an unkind fate that was common to both. Follows the presentment, in general terms, of the adverse circumstances in which Milton lived. There are no details: we are not told how he lost his health or his sight; or what were the comforts of his home; or in what consisted the prosperity of his party. Details such as these belong to the Life; there is no room for them in the brief space available for the Portrait. At the same time, the terms used throughout are as forcible as the writer can make them. He is not content with a bald and colourless statement; and his account of the violent generation into which Milton was born, is a piece of vigorous invective. 'That hateful proscription' . . . 'a profligate court' . . . 'venal and licentious scribblers' . . . 'a loathsome herd'—these are some of the expressions which the impartial historian permits himself to employ. His feelings were deeply engaged—whether rightly or wrongly, matters not—and his portrait is proportionately vivid. And it is undoubtedly the case that the more fervently a writer feels with regard to his subject, the better literature will his work become; though it does not follow that it will be better history. In other words, before you can picture vividly, you must feel strongly.

Having presented his hero as suffering under the infliction of every kind of misfortune and oppression, the author shows him for a moment as he was before these things came upon him, 'in the prime of health and manly beauty, loaded with literary distinctions, and glowing with patriotic hopes'; thus gaining an effect of contrast. In his Introduction, he gained an effect of likeness, by his comparison of Milton with Dante. Every description must depend for its success upon one or other of these devices; because everything in nature gains its value in relation to its surroundings. In other words, the aspect of everything is relative. Had Milton's lot, for instance, been cast in milder times, his fortitude would have been less severely tested, and so it would not have taken on the heroic aspect described by Macaulay.

It is in the judicious selection of an aspect brought relatively into bold relief, and the illustration of such aspect and its relative surroundings by the skilful use of comparison and contrast, and the careful selection of epithet—that is, the selection of the only descriptive word which precisely expresses your meaning—that the excellence of the portrait consists.

VIII

ON TELLING THE TRUTH

TO define the title, we ask, first: What is Truth? and second, What is Telling the Truth? Truth is That which Is. And Telling the Truth is relating, describing or explaining That which Is. But, if truth be that which is, how is it that any question arises as to what is truth and what untruth? The answer is two-fold: Because of the difference in individual perception — in each person's power of seeing; and because of the various motives which lead individuals to conceal or to disguise that which is. The Subject is Abstract; and the definition of its nature will naturally take the form of analysing and explaining the differences of individual perception; the motives which lead to concealment of truth; and the results of these differences and of the operation of these motives.

Seeing that all persons have the same kind of qualities, how does a difference of perception arise? Because of the difference in degree in the possession of these qualities. For instance, all are endowed with courage, curiosity, intelligence or reasoning power, and patience; but, the difference in the degree in which these qualities are possessed is so great, that we mark our sense of it by roughly classifying people as brave or

cowardly, inquisitive or indifferent, stupid or clever, patient or impatient. But, what relation do these variations of temperament—that is, disposition and character—bear, to the power of perceiving truth, and of telling it? Before we answer that question, let us ask another: Which is most commonly encountered, truth or its opposite? For instance, if a number of persons were to give an account of an event which they had witnessed, and in which they were all more or less interested, would the actual truth be immediately evident? Experience replies that it would not; that, so far from arriving immediately at the truth in such a case, persons specially trained to disentangle fact from falsehood, to 'sift evidence,' would be required to discover it. From which, and from our own experience, we may deduce—what? That the mind is naturally prone to slip aside from truth. Why? Consider that which is, and that which we are, and the answer is obvious. That which is, is seldom, at first sight, what we would like to have it, and often what is dreadful to us. Hence, each individual seizes on that particular aspect of the truth, which his particular combination of qualities enables him to perceive, and rejects the rest. Many are capable of grasping what is called a half-truth; few are able to apprehend the whole truth. What quality, then, do we require, first of all, in order to be able to perceive the truth? Courage. And what other qualities? A natural desire for knowledge (which is curiosity), a moderate degree of intelligence or reasoning power, and a high degree of patience. Are these qualities, in the degree required, common? Experience would seem to suggest that they are not. What is the deduction? That the search for truth is conducted by but few; and that the degree of success attained by these few varies in accordance with the

variations of individual temperament. Or, conversely, that the mass of people live in error, whose degree varies in accordance with the variations of individual temperament.

Now you see the relation between variations of temperament—of disposition and character—and the power of perceiving and of telling the truth.

Have we, then, no certain test of truth? In some cases, we have. In which cases? Whenever we can bring a theory—that is, our supposition concerning that which is, based upon such evidence as we can get—to the trial of actual experiment, we have an unfailing test. For instance, in the science of chemistry, a theory is formed, to the effect that when such and such fluids are mixed together, a certain result will occur. If it does occur, we have gained a piece of the knowledge of that which really is. But, in those things which cannot be brought to the trial of experiment, we can never be sure that we know the truth of them; whether they exist, and if so, in what manner. They may be true—we may believe in their truth, if we like, or if we can—but we have no proof. It may be true, for instance, that human life exists on other planets besides the earth; but the truth of the theory cannot be proved, because it cannot be brought to the test of experiment.

These considerations bring us to reflect upon the motives which regulate the Telling of the Truth, as we conceive the truth to be. What, in the first place, is the motive that inspires the search for truth? A natural desire for knowledge, combined with the conviction that the search for truth makes the happiness of life. To gain that knowledge and that happiness, the qualities of courage, intelligence and patience are requisite in order to face and to overcome obstacles and difficulties which frighten those who are not endowed with so high a

degree of such qualities. What is the natural inference? That the seekers after truth would desire to share their happiness with others—in the simplest phrase, to tell them the truth. And so, according to experience, they do so desire. And what, according to experience, is the result? The result (says Experience) is doubtful. Why? Because those who do not find their happiness in seeking truth are happy already. They find their happiness in error, in pleasant delusion and illusion. To them, these are truth. They have not the requisite degree of courage to find happiness in the actual truth itself; and if you rid them of error, they will lose what they have, without being able to gain anything in its place. But (you say) would they not be better, if not happier? Possibly; but the point is open to discussion.

So much for the mere passive concealment of the truth. But, what of the wilful substitution of untruth for truth? Does the same motive, the fear of destroying one kind of happiness without bestowing another in its place, apply in this case? Often; but, are there no other motives? What are they? Simple fear of consequences; and a complex desire (arising from motives other than fear) to avoid or to postpone consequences.

The telling of a lie (as it is called) may thus be due either to a dread of punishment, or to motives of policy; in pursuance of which—it is your deliberate opinion—every one would be made happier; or that certain important objects would be secured; or that you would gain a purely selfish advantage, by a judicious substitution of fiction for fact. Thus, the telling of a lie has been called the postponement of judgment, by the appeal from man; whose knowledge is finite, and who is therefore dependent on what you tell him; to God, whose knowledge is infinite.

Notes.—Individual differences in opinion as to that which is, arise from individual differences of temperament, which affect powers of perception. Experience shows that the mind is prone to slip aside from truth. For, truth often disagreeable at first sight, and often dreadful. Hence, many capable of grasping half-truth; few, whole truth. Qualities essential to its perception: courage, curiosity, intelligence, patience. These qualities rare. Hence, seekers after truth few in number; and their success varied in degree, according to variations of individual temperament. Or, conversely, mass of people live in error, whose degree varies according to same rule. Only test of truth, experiment. No proof obtainable, and hence no certainty possible, in cases where experiment impracticable. Motives for telling truth as we know it, natural impulse to extend that happiness which results from search for truth, to others. But expediency of so doing doubtful, owing to lack of essential qualities in those others; who find their happiness in error. Having deprived them of what they have, it might be impossible to supply anything better. As for wilful substitution of untruth for truth, motives sometimes the same. Other motives: fear of consequences, and desire, actuated by reasons of policy, general or selfish, to avoid or postpone consequences: appeal from man to God.

Central Idea:—The Rarity of Truth. Or:—the Attraction of Untruth; or, The Difficult Way of Happiness.

There are, of course, further developments of the subject which have not been attempted, such as: the moral aspect; the relation of truth to beauty; the eventual prevalence of truth over falsehood.

EXAMPLE VIII

OF TRUTH

FRANCIS BACON (1561-1626)

ESSAYS. I

'What is Truth'? said jesting Pilate; and would not stay for an answer. Certainly there be[1] that delight in giddiness, and count it a bondage to fix a belief; affecting free-will in thinking, as well as in acting. And though the sects of philosophers of that kind be gone, yet there remain certain discoursing wits which are of the same veins, though there be not so much blood in them as was in those of the ancients. But it is not only the difficulty and labour which men take in finding out of truth; nor again that when it is found it imposeth upon men's thoughts; that doth bring lies in favour; but a natural though corrupt love of the lie itself. One of the later school of the Grecians examineth the matter, and is at a stand to think what should be in it, that men should love lies, where neither they make[2] for pleasure, as with poets, nor for advantage, as with the merchant; but for the lie's sake. But I cannot tell: this same truth is a naked and open day-light, that doth not shew the masks and mummeries and triumphs of the world, half so stately and daintily as candle-lights.

Truth may perhaps come to the price of a pearl, that sheweth best by day; but it will not rise to the price of a diamond or carbuncle, that sheweth best in varied lights. A mixture of a lie[3] doth ever add pleasure. Doth any man doubt, that if there were taken out of men's minds vain opinions, flattering hopes, false valuations, imaginations as one would, and the like, but it would leave the minds of a

[1] According to modern usage:—'there are those.'

[2] Grammatically, 'where they make neither.'

[3] Brachylogy—the omission of a word or words necessary for correct expression. Read:—'a mixture [the mixing of] a lie with the truth.'

number of men poor shrunken things, full of melancholy and indisposition, and unpleasing to themselves? One of the Fathers, in great severity, called poesy *vinum daemonum*,[1] because it filleth the imagination; and yet it is but the shadow of a lie. But it is not the lie that passeth through the mind, but the lie that sinketh in and settleth in it, that doth the hurt; such as we spake of before. But howsoever these things are thus in men's depraved judgments and affections, yet truth, which only doth judge itself, teacheth that the inquiry of truth, which is the love-making or wooing of it, the knowledge of truth, which is the presence of it, and the belief of truth, which is the enjoying of it, is the sovereign good of human nature.

The first creature of God, in the works of the days, was the light of the sense; the last was the light of reason; and his sabbath work ever since, is the illumination of his Spirit. First he breathed light upon the face of the matter or chaos; then he breathed light into the face of man; and still he breatheth and inspireth light into the face of his chosen. The poet that beautified the sect that was otherwise inferior to the rest, saith yet excellently well: 'It is a pleasure to stand upon the shore, and to see ships tossed upon the sea; a pleasure to stand in the window of a castle, and to see a battle and the adventures thereof below: but no pleasure is comparable to the standing upon the vantage ground of Truth, (a hill not to be commanded, and where the air is always clear and serene,) and to see the errors, and wanderings, and mists, and tempests, in the vale below'; so always that this prospect be with pity, and not with swelling or pride. Certainly, it is heaven upon earth, to have a man's mind move in charity, rest in providence, and turn upon the poles of truth.

To pass from theological and philosophical truth, to the truth of civil business; it will be acknowledged even by those that practise it not, that clear and round[2] dealing is[3] the honour of man's nature; and that mixture of falsehood is

[1] The wine of demons. [2] Plain, straightforward. [3] Makes.

like alloy in coin of gold and silver, which may make the metal work the better, but it embaseth[1] it. For these winding and crooked courses are the goings of the serpent; which goeth basely upon the belly, and not upon the feet. There is no vice that doth so cover a man with shame as to be found false and perfidious. And therefore Montaigne saith prettily, when he inquired the reason, why the word of the lie should be such a disgrace and such an odious charge? Saith he, 'If it be well weighed, to say that a man lieth, is as much to say, as that he is brave towards God and a coward towards men.' For a lie faces God, and shrinks from man. Surely the wickedness of falsehood and breach of faith cannot possibly be so highly expressed, as in that it shall be the last peal to call the judgments of God upon the generations of men; it being foretold, that when Christ cometh, 'he shall not find faith upon the earth.'

Bacon carries his argument further than we have; for, not only does he assert that men are prone to turn aside from truth but, he affirms that they love lies for the lies' sake. And yet he finds, as we found, that the inquiry, knowledge and belief of truth, are 'the sovereign good of human nature.' Pursuing his argument, he observes that deceit deliberately practised for selfish ends—as in what he calls 'civil business'—is a 'vice' that 'covers a man with shame'; and, by a curious interpretation of Scripture, that the 'wickedness of falsehood and breach of faith . . . shall be the last peal to call the judgments of God upon the generations of men.' He illustrates his meaning by an allegorical reference to the Biblical account of the creation of the world; and by quotation.

Note the apt and striking Introduction. A familiar saying is quoted, and a new turn of meaning is given to it; which both arrests the attention of the reader, and

[1] Debases.

indicates the line of the Argument. The answer which the Roman would not stay for, is given ; for, the Argument explains the nature of truth, largely by defining the nature and operation of untruth. If you can fully define what a thing is *not*, all that remains must be what it *is*—which is what you want to know. This is often Bacon's method. The Conclusion, describing the final effect of untruth, gives the last word of the answer.

Note also the fine metaphorical phrases :—'This same truth is a naked and open day-light, that doth not shew the marks and mummeries and triumphs of the world half so stately and daintily as candle-lights.' . . . 'A mixture of a lie doth ever add pleasure.' . . . 'Certainly, it is heaven upon earth, to have a man's mind move in charity, rest in providence, and turn upon the poles of truth.'

Rose
113 W. 121 Street
New York
29-11-58

IX

WESTMINSTER ABBEY

By defining the title, you will place yourself in a position to select the point of view from which you are to treat the subject; you will then be enabled to decide if it be Abstract, Concrete, or a combination of the two; and you will then treat it accordingly.

What is Westminster Abbey? A great and ancient building of a solemn and splendid beauty, wherein for centuries the sacraments and festivals of the national religion have been celebrated; wherein the Kings and Queens of England have been crowned; and wherein they lie buried together with statesmen, famous soldiers and sailors, poets and a multitude renowned or inglorious. The building itself, then, is highly picturesque; it is of strong architectural and antiquarian interest; it is, moreover, a monument of English history, and a vast storehouse of what are called associations. So that you have the picturesque, architectural, antiquarian, historical and generally moralising points of view from which to choose. You must select one only, because you are limited to a single brief essay. What you select will depend upon your individual taste and the amount of your individual knowledge. If you have little historical and general knowledge, you may have a

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X

A FORGOTTEN BUILDING

THIS subject is of the same kind as the last. It has, however, another method of treatment; a method that vividly illustrates the change which took place in literature during the century which separated the work of Joseph Addison and that of Charles Dickens. The mark of the change is, that whereas in the days of Addison, everyone wrote more or less alike, in obedience to a strict fashion—what is called a literary convention—in the time of Dickens the fashion was dead, and everyone wrote (as men still write) each in his own manner.

Begin, as before, by defining the words of the title. What is a forgotten building? It is an edifice planned for a particular purpose, made with men's hands; the embodiment of hopes or ambitions or aspirations; where people met together until they grew old and died, and another generation replaced them; finally becoming, in the operation of time and change, a place whose original purpose was in part, or wholly, forgotten, so that it began to be neglected, and to fall into disuse and decay.

As before, there are various points of view, one of which we are to select; and as before, we select that

from which the subject is dealt with in the Example quoted. That point of view may be called the chief and central point of view in life and literature: the point of view of Human Interest. The particular kind of human interest which may arise, whatever it be, will form the Central Idea. Read the accompanying essay (part of a larger essay) with this proposition in your mind, and its meaning will become clear to you.

EXAMPLE X

CITY OF LONDON CHURCHES

CHARLES DICKENS (1812-1870)

THE UNCOMMERCIAL TRAVELLER

Where shall I begin my round of hidden and forgotten old churches in the City of London?

It is twenty minutes short of eleven on a Sunday morning, when I stroll down one of the many narrow hilly streets in the City that tend due south to the Thames. It is my first experiment, and I have come to the region of Whittington in an omnibus, and we have put down a fierce-eyed spare old woman, whose slate-coloured gown smells of herbs, and who walked up Aldersgate Street to some chapel where she comforts herself with brimstone doctrine, I warrant. We have also put down a stouter and sweeter old lady, with a pretty large prayer-book in an unfolded pocket-handkerchief, who got out at a corner of a court near Stationers' Hall, and who I think must go to church there, because she is the widow of some deceased old Company's Beadle. The rest of our freight were mere chance pleasure-seekers and rural walkers, and went on to the Blackwall railway. So many bells are ringing, when I stand undecided at a street corner, that every sheep in the ecclesiastical fold might be a

bell-wether.[1] The discordance is fearful. My state of indecision is referable to, and about equally divisible among, four great churches, which are all within sight and sound, all within the space of a few square yards.

As I stand at the street corner, I don't see as many as four people at once going to church, though I see as many as four churches with their steeples clamouring for people.[2] I choose my church, and go up the flight of steps to the great entrance in the tower. A mouldy tower within, and like a neglected washhouse. A rope comes through the beamed roof, and a man in the corner pulls it and clashes the bell—a whity-brown man, whose clothes were once black—a man with flue on him, and cobweb. He stares at me, wondering how I come there, and I stare at him, wondering how he comes there. Through a screen of wood and glass, I peep into the dim church. About twenty people are discernible, waiting to begin. Christening would seem to have faded out of this church long ago, for the font has the dust of desuetude thick upon it, and its wooden cover (shaped like an old-fashioned tureen-cover) looks as if it wouldn't come off, upon requirement. I perceive the altar to be rickety and the Commandments damp. Entering after this survey, I jostle the clergyman in his canonicals, who is entering too from a dark lane behind a pew of state with curtains, where nobody sits. The pew is ornamented with four blue wands, once carried by four somebodys, I suppose, before somebody else, but which there is nobody now to hold or receive honour from. I open the door of a family pew, and shut myself in; if I could occupy twenty family pews at once I might have them. The clerk, a brisk young man (how does *he* come here?), glances at me knowingly, as who should say, 'You have done it now; you must stop.' Organ plays. Organ-loft is in a small gallery across the church; gallery congregation, two girls. I wonder within myself what will happen when we are required to sing.

There is a pale heap of books in the corner of my pew,

[1] Metaphor. [2] Personification

and while the organ, which is hoarse and sleepy, plays in such a fashion that I can hear more of the rusty working of the stops than of any music, I look at the books, which are mostly bound in faded baize and stuff. They belonged in 1754 to the Dowgate family ; and who were they ? Jane Comport must have married Young Dowgate, and come into the family that way ; Young Dowgate was courting Jane Comport when he gave her her prayer-book, and recorded the presentation in the fly-leaf ; if Jane were fond of Young Dowgate, why did she die and leave the book here ? Perhaps at the rickety altar, and before the damp Commandments, she, Comport, had taken him, Dowgate, in a flush of youthful hope and joy, and perhaps it had not turned out in the long run as great a success as was expected ? . . .

Among the Uncommercial travels in which I have engaged, this year of Sunday travel occupies its own place, apart from all the rest. Whether I think of the church where the sails of the oyster-boats in the river almost flapped against the windows, or of the church where the railroad made the bells hum as the train rushed by above the roof, I recall a curious experience. On summer Sundays, in the gentle rain or the bright sunshine—either, deepening the idleness of the idle City—I have sat, in that singular silence which belongs to resting-places usually astir, in scores of buildings at the heart of the world's metropolis, unknown to far greater numbers of people speaking the English tongue, than the ancient edifices of the Eternal City, or the Pyramids of Egypt. The dark vestries and registries into which I have peeped, and the little hemmed-in churchyards that have echoed to my feet, have left impressions on my memory as distinct and quaint as any it has in that way received. In all those dusty registers that the worms are eating, there is not a line but made some hearts leap, or some tears flow, in their day. Still and dry now, still and dry ![1] and the old tree,

[1] The figure of speech known as Exclamation.

at the window with no room for its branches, has seen them all out. So with the tomb of the old Master of the old Company, on which it drips. His son restored it and died, his daughter restored it and died, and then he had been remembered long enough, and the tree took possession of him, and his name cracked out.

There are few more striking indications of the changes of manners and customs that two or three hundred years have brought about, than these deserted churches. Many of them are handsome and costly structures, several of them were designed by Wren, many of them arose from the ashes of the Great Fire, others of them outlived the plague and the fire too, to die a slow death in these later days.[1] No one can be sure of the coming time; but it is not too much to say of it that it has no sign in its outsetting tides, of the reflux to these churches of their congregations and uses. They remain like the tombs of the old citizens who lie beneath them and around them, Monuments of another age. They are worth a Sunday-exploration, now and then, for they yet echo, not unharmoniously, to the time when the City of London really was London; when the 'Prentices and Trained Bands were of mark in the state; when even the Lord Mayor himself was a Reality—not a Fiction conventionally be-puffed on one day in the year by illustrious friends, who no less conventionally laugh at him on the remaining three hundred and sixty-four days.

You see how, in dealing with the subject, the writer's attention is concentrated upon the Human Interest which is inseparably bound up with the history and aspect of the place he is observing. For the building, as a building, he cares nothing; for its history, apart from its inhabitants, nothing. Its aspect, picturesque though it may be, interests him only in connection with some detail of human life . . . 'a pew of state with curtains,

[1] Personification.

where nobody sits. The pew is ornamented with four blue wands, once carried by four somebodies, I suppose, before somebody else, but which there is nobody now to hold or receive honour from;' and 'the pale heap of books in the corner of the pew,' leads him to speculations upon the Dowgate family and the Comport branch.

It is clear that the point of view is that of Human Interest. But, human interest is as varied as the spectacle of human life. What kind of human interest makes the Central Idea in this picture? It is not, as in the last Example, explicitly stated in the Introduction; but, it is irresistibly suggested—a more artistic method. The description of the two old women in the omnibus; and 'I don't see as many as four people at once going to church, though I see as many as four churches with their steeples clamouring for people'—these observations strike the note. The whole of the body of the essay—you can hardly call it the Argument—is pitched in the same key; every word is designed to confirm the impression, to illustrate the Central Idea. What is it? In the transition to the Conclusion, which begins at 'Among the Uncommercial travels in which I have engaged,' the Central Idea, which has been so vividly illustrated, is presented in a slightly different form . . . 'scores of buildings at the heart of the world's metropolis, unknown to far greater numbers of people speaking the English tongue, than the ancient edifices of the Eternal City, or the Pyramids of Egypt. . . . In all these dusty registers that the worms are eating, there is not a line but made some hearts leap, or some tears flow, in their day. Still and dry now, still and dry! and the old tree at the window with no room for its branches, has seen them all out.'

And then, in the Conclusion itself, which begins There are few more striking indications of the changes,'

the Central Idea is plainly defined, so that the least attentive reader cannot help understanding what his author meant. In other words, the artist labels his picture. It is quite complete without the label, which is added merely to assist the intelligence of the public. 'Monuments of another age'—that is the Central Idea. The few decaying and exhausted people who still linger in those musty shades, are relics of an elder day, survivals of another generation; it is under that aspect, and that aspect alone, that they are presented.

The Subject is virtually Concrete; having to do with matters of observation and experience. It is for you to make the observation and to gain the experience—either from the actual building; or from the recollection of it. The point of view, is the master point of view of Human Interest. The Central Idea, any kind of human interest that takes your fancy in this connection. The questions you must ask yourself are:—

Which, among the Impressions I receive, is the impression to choose for my Central Idea? What things are they which give me that impression, and which I am to describe (excluding all others) in order to present my Central Idea? To what reflections, contributing to the illustration of the Central Idea, do they give rise? What quotations are there which will help to illustrate it?

The answers to these questions, duly disposed in the Introduction, Argument and Conclusion, will make your essay.

XI

OF GARDENS

WHAT is a garden? To define it, is not so easy as it would seem. It is a piece of ground cultivated and made beautiful by man for his pleasure. That is a working definition; but, have you yet arrived at the Idea of a garden? Until you have, you will not be able to deal adequately with the Subject. Analyse the definition. If you take a piece of ground in order to cultivate and make it beautiful, what does that action imply with regard to the piece of ground? That the ground was originally uncultivated and, if not ugly at least, not sufficiently beautiful. In other words, it was a piece of Nature. It is then, a piece of Nature which you take in order to cultivate and to make beautiful—that is, you cultivate it in order to make it beautiful. What does that statement amount to, in other words? That man, being discontented with Nature as she is, takes upon himself to improve her. There seems a fallacy here. What question immediately arises? How is it possible to improve upon Nature? And yet, the garden is undoubtedly more beautiful than the original piece of ground. Where, then, is the fallacy? you probably feel sure that it exists somewhere. Let us examine our definition more closely.

Man, we said, is discontented with Nature? But, if he be, where did he learn his discontent? For discontent implies the knowledge of the existence of something better; and man knows nothing that is better than Nature, because Nature is all he knows. You say, perhaps, that he learnt it from within himself; and, while that proposition may be true in a sense, it does not carry you much farther, because man is himself part of Nature. We are shut up, then, to this conclusion; that man learnt his discontent with Nature and his consequent desire to improve her, from Nature herself. Why not? If you put the matter with a little more precision, and say, Man learnt his discontent with certain aspects of Nature, and his consequent ambition to improve them, from certain other aspects of Nature; you will I think find no objection to the statement. And what is this improvement of Nature called? The word improvement probably strikes you as inaccurate. What then, do we call those (we will say) modifications of Nature which we bring to pass when we make a garden, or build a house, or paint a picture, or write a poem?—it is all one. They are called Art. And what is Art? That is a large question; but it will suffice for our present purpose to take the definition of Aristotle, and to reply that Art is the Imitation of Nature. That sounds—does it not?—more reasonable. But how does that definition fit in with our conclusion, that art is an *improvement* upon Nature? To answer that question and so complete the argument, we must ascertain exactly what Aristotle meant by the word Imitation. 'Art imitates Nature . . . Fine art . . . discovers the "form" towards which an object tends, the result which Nature strives to attain, but rarely or never can attain. . . . It passes beyond the bare reality given by Nature, and expresses a purified form of reality disengaged from accident, and freed from

ambitions which thwart its development . . . unfolding itself according to the law of its own being, apart from alien influences and the disturbances of chance.'[1]

According to this theory—and none better was ever framed—the same law of aspiration and growth towards perfection is inherent—is implanted—both in Nature and in man; and some aspects and qualities of Nature and man touch perfection at times, showing what the whole may become. It is thus man's peculiar office to do, as it were, for Nature what she cannot always do for herself: that is, to take up the work where she leaves it, and to bring it to perfection. Here is no contradiction, because man is part of Nature; he is not outside her; you may say with truth, that he is a certain part of Nature's machinery which is designed to develop towards perfection certain other parts.

We have travelled a long way to arrive at a definition of the Idea of a Garden. Now, what is it? (A piece of natural ground, presenting a certain undeveloped aspect of Nature, which is perfected and made beautiful by man in accordance with the beauty and perfection (or hints of perfection) which he perceives in certain other rare and finely developed aspects of Nature.)

And now, what is the Subject? Both Abstract and Concrete. As regards the principle that governs the making of gardens, Abstract: as regards the gardens you know, or which you may invent, Concrete.

Having arrived at our principle, we must proceed to explain in what manner it should be acted upon. What is the first thing to do, in order to make a beautiful garden—or indeed anything else? To go to Nature to discover those rare and finely developed aspects which you are to imitate—that is, to produce by development. Gardening is a most ancient art; and experience has

[1] *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art.* Butcher.

taught us by this time, what to look for. Certain aspects of Nature there are, of course, which will not serve us here: the formidable beauty of great mountains—the magic of wide waste spaces—the mystery of deep forests, and many more. But, the charm of rounded hills descending gently in green declivities, clear brooks and standing pools, thick foliage and massed blossom, serried avenue and defending hedge, grassy plain and moss-clad boulder, and even a wild profusion: the charm of these is for us to capture and to perfect. (For, a garden is designed wholly for the sake of pleasure.) Why is it capable of affording a high degree of pleasure? Because the contemplation of the beautiful is the highest pleasure known to man.

The next step in the process is, obviously, to show how in practice these various elements may be harmoniously combined; to give plans, and designs, and detailed descriptions. But, adequately to do this, you would have to acquaint yourself with the famous gardens of the world, and with a considerable literature on the subject. This, however, under the circumstances, is clearly impracticable. You may, however, study Bacon's description of an ideal garden, which is the ideal Renaissance Garden in England; and this will supply you with instances of the working of the principles which we have laid down. It will, moreover, give you a definite standard of taste by which to judge those gardens—old or new—which you know; and will give you a basis to start from, if you essay to take the line of describing a garden designed by yourself.

Notes:—A garden is a piece of ground cultivated in order to be made beautiful for man's pleasure. In other words, it is a work of art. And art is imitation of Nature; that is, the perfecting of certain aspects of Nature, in the light of certain other aspects, by developing them according to the laws of their own being. This is

man's office; man being part of Nature. Only certain aspects of Nature to be imitated. These have been defined by long experience. Sole object, to give pleasure: man's highest pleasure consisting in the contemplation of beauty. Principle having been laid down, practice may be illustrated by Bacon's famous essay on the ideal English Garden of the Renaissance; and by personal knowledge or invention.

Central Idea. The Garden as a work of Art; and therefore (in the words of Lord Bacon) as 'the purest of human pleasures.'

EXAMPLE XI

OF GARDENS

Francis Bacon. (1561-1626.)

ESSAYS. XLVI

God Almighty first planted a garden.[1] And indeed it is the purest of human pleasures. It is the greatest refreshment to the spirits of man; without which buildings and palaces are but gross handiworks: and a man shall ever see that when ages grow to civility and elegancy, men come to build stately sooner than to garden finely; as if gardening were the greater perfection. I do hold it, in the royal ordering of gardens, there ought to be gardens for all the months in the year; in which severally things of beauty may be then in season. . . .

And because the breath of flowers is far sweeter in the air (where it comes and goes like the warbling of music[2]) than in the hand, therefore nothing is more fit for that delight, than to know what be the flowers and plants that do best perfume the air. Roses, damask and red, are fast

[1] An example of Bacon's striking Introductory sentences.
[2] An example of effective use of adjectival clause in brackets.

flowers of their smells; so that you may walk by a whole row of them, and find nothing of their sweetness; yea, though it be in a morning's dew. Bays likewise yield no smell as they grow. Rosemary little; nor sweet marjoram. That which above all others yields the sweetest smell in the air, is the violet, specially the white double violet, which comes twice a year; about the middle of April, and about Bartholomew-tide.[1] Next to that is the musk-rose. Then the strawberry-leaves dying, with a most excellent cordial smell. Then the flower of the vines; it is a little dust, like the dust of a bent, which grows upon the cluster in the first coming forth. Then sweet-briar. Then wall-flowers, which are very delightful to be set under a parlour or lower chamber window. Then pinks and gilliflowers, specially the matted pink and clove gilliflower. Then the flowers of the lime-tree. Then the honeysuckles, so they be somewhat afar off. Of bean-flowers I speak not, because they are field flowers. But those which perfume the air most delightfully, not 'passed by as the rest, but being trodden upon and crushed, are three; that is, burnet, wild-thyme, and watermints. Therefore you are to set whole alleys of them, to have the pleasure when you walk or tread.

For gardens (speaking of those which are indeed prince-like, as we have done of buildings), the contents ought not well to be under thirty acres of ground; and to be divided into three parts; a green in the entrance; a heath or desert in the going forth; and the main garden in the midst; besides alleys on both sides. And I like well that four acres of ground be assigned to the green; six to the heath; four and four to either side: and twelve to the main garden. The green hath two pleasures; the one, because nothing is more pleasant to the eye than green grass kept finely shorn; the other, because it will give you a fair alley in the midst, by which you may go in front upon a stately hedge, which is to enclose the garden. But because the

[1] The Feast of Saint Bartholomew, August 24th.

alley will be long, and, in great heat of the year or day, you ought not to buy the shade in the garden by going in the sun through the green; therefore you are, of either side the green, to plant a covert alley, upon carpenters' work, about twelve foot in height, by which you may go in shade into the garden. As for the making of knots or figures with divers coloured earths, that they may lie under the windows of the house on that side which the garden stands, they be but toys: you may see as good sights many times in tarts. The garden is best to be square, encompassed on all the four sides with a stately arched hedge. The arches to be upon pillars of carpenters' work, of some ten foot high, and six foot broad; and the spaces between of the same dimension with the breadth of the arch. Over the arches let there be an entire hedge of some four foot high, framed also upon carpenters' work; and upon the upper hedge, over every arch, a little turret, with a belly, enough to receive a cage of birds: and over every space between the arches some other little figure, with broad plates of round coloured glass gilt, for the sun to play upon. But this hedge I intend to be raised upon a bank, not steep, but gently slope, of some six foot, set all with flowers. Also I understand, that this square of the garden should not be the whole breadth of the ground, but to leave on either side ground enough for diversity of side alleys; unto which the two covert alleys of the green may deliver you. But there must be no alleys with hedges at either end of this great enclosure; not at the hither end, for letting[1] your prospect upon this fair hedge from the green; nor at the further end, for letting your prospect from the hedge through the arches upon the heath.

For the ordering of the ground within the great hedge, I leave it to variety of device; advising nevertheless that whatsoever form you cast it into, first, it be not too busy, or full of work. Wherein I, for my part, do not like images cut out in juniper or other garden stuff; they be

[1] Hindering. Read :—'which would hinder.'

for children. Little low hedges, round, like welts,[1] with some pretty pyramides, I like well; and in some places, fair columns upon frames of carpenters' work. I would also have the alleys spacious and fair. You may have closer alleys upon the side grounds, but none in the main garden. I wish also, in the very middle, a fair mount, with three ascents, and alleys, enough for four to walk abreast; which I would have to be perfect circles, without any bulwarks or embossments; and the whole mount to be thirty foot high; and some fine banqueting-house, with some chimneys neatly cast,[2] and without too much glass. . . .

For the heath, which was the third part of our plot, I wish it to be framed, as much as may be, to a natural wildness. Trees I would have none in it, but some thickets made only of sweet-briar and honeysuckle, and some wild vine amongst; and the ground set with violets, strawberries, and primroses. For these are sweet, and prosper in the shade. And these to be in the heath, here and there, not in any order. I like also little heaps, in the nature of mole-hills (such as are in wild heaths), to be set, some with wild thyme; some with pinks; some with germander,[3] that gives a good flower to the eye; some with periwinkle; some with violets; some with strawberries; some with cowslips; some with daisies; some with red roses; some with lilium convallium; some with sweet-williams red; some with bears'-foot;[4] and the like low flowers, being withal sweet and sightly. Part of which heaps are to be with standards of little bushes pricked upon their top, and part without. The standards to be roses; juniper; holly; berberries; (but here and there, because of the smell of their blossoms); red currants; gooseberry; rosemary; bays; sweet-briar; and such like. But these standards to be kept with cutting, that they grow not out of course. . . .

[1] Borders, edgings.
[2] Designed, or constructed.
[3] *Teucrium Chamaedrys.*
[4] *Helleborus foetidus.*

So I have made a platform [1] of a princely garden, partly by precept, partly by drawing, not a model, but some general lines of it; and in this I have spared for no cost. But it is nothing for great princes, that for the most part taking advice with workmen, with no less cost set their things together; and sometimes add statuas,[2] and such things, for state and magnificence, but nothing to the true pleasure of a garden.

Bacon, you see, assumes the Idea, the principle, of the garden, which we have reasoned out, to be known to his reader. 'God Almighty first planted a garden,' he says, in his Introductory sentence; which concise statement summarises our whole contention, that a garden is first of all a work of art; for God stands here as the Great Artist. In his Introduction (which ends at the words 'greater perfection') Bacon clearly indicates his Central Idea; the garden as a work of high art, and therefore as the minister of 'the purest of human pleasures.'

The Argument illustrates the Central Idea, by describing those aspects of perfected nature which (in the writer's view) are the most beautiful, and which therefore minister the highest pleasure. So magical are his phrases, that to read the essay, is like walking in the royal pleasaunce designed by my Lord. He begins with the greatest delight of gardens, the crown of their being, the flowers; goes on to shew how certain of nature's aspects may be perfected in the garden; the green pasture, the wild profusion of the heath 'or desert,' the cloistered alleys of the wood; and their several proportions. These proportions are (though the author does not say so) regulated by man's natural powers of locomotion. Thirty acres is about the limit

[1] Plan, pattern. [2] Statues.

of the space he may conveniently patrol; gaining access from his house in a few minutes to every part. Bacon is careful that he should not have to expose himself to the sun, in order to 'buy the shade'; and here, he has recourse to architecture, the mother of the arts. Now, all the arts are interdependent; none stands alone; and Bacon, wisest of men, has no scruple in building 'pillars of carpenters' work'—'a little turret,' and in the spandrels[1] of the arches 'some other little figure, with broad plates of round coloured glass gilt, for the sun to play upon.' Then we come to the heath, which is to be of a 'natural wildness'; and here, it would seem at first that the artist departs from his principles. Instead of perfecting an aspect of nature, he would transplant it bodily. This, at first sight, is not art; but, if we examine his design more closely, we find that he will plant his heath with all manner of wild flowers, which, in nature, would not be found together in the same place; which brings it within the operation of his main principle. Moreover, he raises 'little heaps'; and his standard bushes are to be kept 'with cutting.'

And 'so,' he says, in his Conclusion, 'I have made a platform'—a flat figure, a plan—'of a princely garden.'

He is delineating the perfect garden; and so, as he explains, he did not count the cost.

Fashions change, and each succeeding generation has its own tastes. That is to say, of the infinite variety of combinations which the artist can make of nature's aspects, some give pleasure to one set of people at one time, some to another set of people at another time. The modern English garden is not designed on Bacon's plan: I do not say it is better or worse; but, it is different.

[1] The flat piece of wall-space between the shoulders of adjoining arches.

XII

OF AGRICULTURE

'AGRICULTURE,' says the dictionary, 'is the generic term, including at once the science, the art, and the process of supplying human wants by raising the products of the soil, and by the associated industries.' The Subject, then, dealing with matters of experience, is Concrete. How are you to treat it? Will you discourse of the science, or the art, or the process? The objection to dealing with any or all of these aspects is, that unless you are a professional husbandman, it is very unlikely that you will know anything of them whatsoever. What method, then, can you adopt? Can you discover a point of view outside those indicated by the dictionary? This problem will require a little consideration. You are to ask yourself questions until you arrive at a solution.

If Agriculture be a science, an art, and a process, it must be practised by a certain class of men. These men are professional agriculturists; farmers, dairymen, stock-breeders, and the like. And if they are professional men, their profession makes their life. Examining that proposition, we see that we know what the profession is—it is the science, the art and the rest—but, what kind of life is that which results from its

practice? Here, we strike upon the point of view of Human Interest. For, what is the most interesting point to any given person with regard to any given profession or trade? What is the first question you, for instance, would ask concerning it? You would ask—would you not?—what sort of life it makes? And what would be the motive prompting the question? Surely, the desire to ascertain what amount of interest (or pleasure, which is the same thing) the life would give you. You may here object that the desire might be to discover the amount of profit in money to be gained by it. The question would then take this form:—What amount of pleasure can I buy with the profits of the life, irrespective of the life itself? But this, for the purpose of our present argument, is practically the same question.

Pursuing, then, your inquiries into the nature of the life of the agriculturist, on the lines of its human interest, you ask:—What is the Idea, the principle underlying this way of life? It is that of man tilling the earth out of which he was made, to gain the food which will keep him alive; a creature of the dust helping the dust to bring forth other creatures, nourishing them and being nourished by them in its turn. Thus the wheel of life revolves in its eternal circle, according to the law of nature. This is the natural life of man; the life nearest to nature which he may lead. What relation, then, does this way of life bear to the rest: to the life of the builder, the engineer, the doctor, the merchant, the scholar, the sailor, the artist? It is the trade of the agriculturist which makes all other trades possible. Why? Because he supplies the food of man. 'Agriculture is the foundation of manufactures,' says Gibbon the historian. But, how does the agricultural way of life compare with others, as regards the pleasure it

brings? As it is the most natural life, so, you would say, it is also the happiest life; and so, in its essentials, it is. The farmer—to take the farmer as representing the agriculturist—lives much in the open air, which is the first condition of health, as health is the first condition of happiness; he labours with his hands, which is another condition of health; he has to do with animals and growing things, and all his care is to cultivate their welfare. Now, of the callings which must be pursued in cities (for the pursuit of which, indeed, cities exist), their first condition is (speaking generally) that they must be carried on within-doors; an unnatural and therefore an unhealthy condition; the labour is often of the brain, which tells upon the nerves; it is labour, moreover, which deals with the shifts of men; with their greed, ambition, and crime, their strivings after the unknown, their diseases and misfortunes. Which, then, on the face of it, is likely to be the happiest life? Which, in point of experience, is the happiest? Undoubtedly, the natural life, as against the artificial life of civilisation. What—by way of illustration—is so often the aspiration of the dweller in cities? Is it not to end his days 'in the country'?—that country which he has scarcely seen, and whose simple joys he has long since lost the power to appreciate. And if the conditions of a country life are those which naturally result in happiness; while the conditions of what the late Mr. Stevenson called 'the miserable life of cities,' naturally tend to unhappiness, so that where such a tendency is averted, it is in spite of the conditions of life and not because of them: what is the result of the continued operation of the one set of conditions, compared with the result of the other? What, for instance, is the effect of a country existence upon a family which for generations has lived by agriculture in any form? Does

that race grow stronger, hardier, and more beautiful? Or does the stock tend to deteriorate? Under proper conditions of food and lodging, we find the old yeoman families to be unmatched in vigour and a rustic beauty. And what is the effect of a city life upon a family which has supported that artificial existence for even three generations? Scientific persons tell us that the third generation is already degenerate; so that a town population, except in so far as it is renewed from time to time with fresh blood from the country, tends rapidly to decay and final extinction. Have you never observed the people thronging the pavements of a great town, and compared them—their pallid, ugly faces and meagre forms—with what they might be? Nature exacts a penalty from those who lead an unnatural life.

But, here a difficulty presents itself. We cannot all be farmers. Nature herself has designed very many for a different life. It is impossible to meet that objection as a whole; we may, however, reply that if some form of city life be inevitable, it should be arranged so far as practicable on the country model. Wide, open spaces, broad roads, a copious water supply and an efficient drainage system—with these, the evils of cities would be mitigated. There is, moreover, the law of compensation to be considered.

These are the main characteristics, and their contrasts, of the mode of life we are considering. There remain to be elaborated its more personal details; the little ways in which its incidents and accidents affect a man: the changing beauty of the seasons, amid which he lives; the homely interest of the ploughing, the sowing, the uprising crops, the hay-making, and the harvest; the pasturing of the cattle, and their nightly calling home; the tending of the sheep by the lonely shepherd, who beholds the sun rise and set, and out-watches the stars

on the dark hills. These, and such as these, depend upon your individual knowledge and your individual powers of observation and appreciation.

There is much, also, to be learned from books, both old and new. For the old, you will find some curious information in the example cited below; for the new, there are the poets, and the works of Thomas Hardy and of Richard Jefferies—to name but these. In Jefferies' 'Notes on Landscape Painting' (*The Life of the Fields*) you will find a wonderful picture of country life. 'The earth,' he begins, 'has a way of absorbing things that are placed upon it, of drawing from them their stiff individuality of newness, and throwing over them something of her own antiquity. As the furrow smooths and brightens the share, as the mist eats away the sharpness of the iron angles, so, in a larger manner, the machines sent forth to conquer the soil are conquered by it, become a part of it, and as natural as the old, old scythe and reaping-hook. Thus already the new agriculture has grown hoar.'

The passage seems to suggest a kind of human interest which would make the Central Idea of an essay for which the quotation would serve as head-line:—The ancient, natural way of life; how it is unchangeable; its toils and pleasures; and how, scarce altered since the beginning, it makes the foundation of civilisation.

Notes:—Agriculture is the science, the art, and the process of supplying human wants by raising the products of the soil. In other words, the idea, the principle, of the most ancient means of livelihood, is that of man, himself a creature of the dust, helping the dust to bring forth other creatures, nourishing them and being nourished by them in his turn. Thus the wheel of life revolves. Nearest life to nature. Foundation

and therefore Cicero says, the pleasures of a husbandman, 'mihi ad sapientis vitam proxime videntur accedere,' come very nigh to those of a philosopher. There is no other sort of life that affords so many branches of praise to a panegyrist: the utility of it, to a man's self; the usefulness, or rather necessity, of it to all the rest of mankind; the innocence, the pleasure, the antiquity, the dignity. . . .

As for the necessity of this art, it is evident enough, since this can live without all others, and no one other without this. This is like speech, without which the society of men cannot be preserved; the others, like figures and tropes of speech, which serve only to adorn it. Many nations have lived, and some do still, without any art but this: not so elegantly, I confess, but still they live; and almost all the other arts, which are here practised, are beholding to this for most of their materials.

The innocence of this life is the next thing for which I commend it; and if husbandmen preserve not that, they are much to blame, for no men are so free from the temptations of iniquity. They live by what they can get by industry from the earth; and others, by what they can catch by craft from men. They live upon an estate given them by their mother; and others, upon an estate cheated from their brethren. They live, like sheep and kine, by the allowances of nature; and others, like wolves and foxes, by the acquisitions of rapine.[1]

And if great delights be joyn'd with so much innocence, I think it is ill done of men, not to take them here, where they are so tame, and ready at hand, rather than hunt for them in courts and cities, where they are so wild, and the chase so troublesome and dangerous.

We are here among the vast and noble scenes of nature; we are there among the pitiful shifts of policy: we walk here in the light and open ways of the divine bounty; we grope there in the dark and confused labyrinths of humane

[1] The whole paragraph is constructed with the Balanced sentence; and so almost throughout.

malice: our senses are here feasted with the clear and genuine taste of their objects, which are all sophisticated there, and for the most part overwhelmed with their contraries. Here, pleasure looks (methinks) like a beautiful, constant, and modest wife; it is there an impudent, fickle, and painted harlot. Here, is harmless and cheap plenty; there, guilty and expenceful luxury.

I shall only instance in one delight more, the most natural and best-natured of all others, a perpetual companion of the husbandman; and that is, the satisfaction of looking round about him, and seeing nothing but the effects and improvements of his own art and diligence; to be always gathering of some fruits of it, and at the same time to behold others ripening, and others budding: to see all his fields and gardens covered with the beauteous creatures of his own industry; and to see, like God, that all his works are good:—[1]

> —Hinc atque hinc glomerantur Orcades; ipsi
> Agricolæ tacitum pertentant gaudia pectus.
>
> On his heart-string a secret joy does strike.

The antiquity of his art is certainly not to be contested by any other. The three first men in the world, were a gardener, a plowman, and a grazier; and if any man object, that the second of these was a murtherer, I desire he would consider, that as soon as he was so, he quitted our profession, and turn'd builder.[2] It is for this reason, I suppose, that Ecclesiasticus forbids us to hate husbandry; 'because (says he) the Most High has created it.' We were all born to this art, and taught by nature to nourish our bodies by the same earth out of which they were made, and to which they must return, and pay at last for their sustenance.

Example of the construction known as the Climax. 'The word "climax," is generally used in common speech for the culminating point, but, strictly speaking, it applies to the whole flight of ascending steps.' (Minto.) The sentence increases in an ascending scale of signification.

[2] An oft-quoted epigram.

Behold the original and primitive nobility of all those great persons, who are too proud now, not only to till the ground, but almost to tread upon it.[1] We may talk what we please of lillies, and lions rampant, and spread-eagles, in fields *d'or* or *d'argent*; but, if heraldry were guided by reason, a plough in a field arable would be the most noble and antient arms.

All these considerations make me fall into the wonder and complaint of Columella, how it should come to pass that all arts or sciences (for the dispute, which is an art, and which a science, does not belong to the curiosity of us husbandmen,) metaphysick, physick, morality, mathematicks, logick, rhetorick etc., which are all, I grant, good and useful faculties, (except only metaphysick which I do not know whether it be anything or no;) but even vaulting, fencing, dancing, attiring, cookery, carving, and such like vanities, should all have publick schools and masters, and yet that we should never see or hear of any man, who took upon him the profession of teaching this so pleasant, so virtuous, so profitable, so honourable, so necessary art. . . .

The Central Idea of the author is that because the calling of Agriculture is the 'next in kindred' to philosophy, which is the highest life, it is to be commended. Like every writer of his time, he is steeped in the wisdom of the 'antients'; he cannot move a step without a side glance at the classics; and if he can confirm his arguments with a citation from Virgil or Columella, he is entirely satisfied. The central idea is illustrated in his Introduction; in which the Roman poet is presented as the perfect man, who is wholly fortunate.

The Argument, after admitting that all men cannot be philosophers, commends a country life, as compre-

[1] The figure of speech known as Apostrophe. The author is apostrophising, or addressing, his reader.

hending 'more parts of philosophy,'[1] than any other employment. The principles of agriculture, says the writer, fortifying himself with a quotation from Varro, are one with those of nature. The Argument proceeds to illustrate the necessity and the various beauties of the life of the husbandman. Cowley is a close reasoner and an eloquent writer; although he drew largely upon the classics, his thoughts are of his own coining; and what he says is worth careful study. Follow his argument down to his complaint that all arts and sciences are taught by skilled teachers, save 'this so pleasant, so virtuous, so profitable, so honourable, so necessary art'; which might logically form his Conclusion. The rest of the Essay—not here quoted—is an excellent example of a pleasant piece of literary gossip: which, illustrating the foregoing Argument by curious references and ingenious quotations, might be called an extended Conclusion.

[1] Philosophy may here be taken to mean:—The search for Truth, and the living in accordance with Truth so far as it is known.

XIII

ON BOOKS AND READING

WHAT are books? The expression in words of the human mind. That is a comprehensive definition. Pursue it a little further. What is the expression—the result of the working—of the mind? Thought. Books, then, are the stored receptacles of thought; for, strictly speaking, you cannot make even the simplest kind of book without thought. But, when we speak of books as storehouses of thought, we do not as a rule include works upon statistics, manuals of geography, or treatises on the art of making paper-flowers. So that we must here distinguish. What kind of books do we mean, when we use the word in its ordinary conversational acceptation? Surely, works of fiction, poetry, drama, essays, and sometimes history. Now, of what form of mind-expression are these the result? Of the imagination. And what is imagination? The image-making power, by means of which the mind raises up pictures to itself of what has been, or what might be. By books, then, we mean the stored products of the imagination.

What is reading? The action of the mind which takes in these products of other men's imaginations and stores them in the memory. What question arises

here? The inquiry into the motive which induces one to acquire the fruit of the mental labour of others. Why, in the first place, since everyone is gifted with imagination, should not each be content with the product of his own?[1] Because (obviously) everyone is not gifted with the same degree of imagination; those of a lower degree, are desirous to enjoy the result of the working of the higher degree. What does that proposition imply? That, ranged in an ascending scale according to power of imagination, all persons upon a certain level would read the whole of the works (given time and opportunity as well as intention) of the persons above that level. But, do they? What does experience tell us with regard to individual tastes and preferences? That, so far from embracing the whole of the works produced by those of superior powers to himself, any given person will manifest a decided preference for a limited number, entirely excluding the rest. And what does that proposition imply? That everyone differs, not only in *degree* but, in *kind* of imaginative power. In the common phrases, people look at things from different points of view—what is one man's meat is another man's poison. And one kind of imagination cannot appreciate another kind. The rule is, you can only see what you bring with you the capacity for seeing.

We have, then, in pursuing our inquiry into the motive which induces one to acquire the fruit of the mental labour of others, discovered that each person is gifted with a different degree and a different kind of imaginative power; so that he is at the same time eager to enjoy the results of other imaginations than his own, and limited in his choice of them. But, the answer to the inquiry is still incomplete. Why is it

[1] See head-line quotation to Example XIII.

that one desires to gain this mental wealth? The answer is plain: for the sake of pleasure. If you reply, for the sake of gaining knowledge, you do but say the same thing in other words. For, we gain knowledge, because the acquisition of knowledge is, theoretically, the highest pleasure in life. And if you reply, again, that knowledge is often acquired for the sake of what money or other profit can be made out of it, the proposition remains the same; because that money or that profit is made in order to be exchanged for some form of pleasure. But, we are dealing with works of imagination only; which are not in the same category with that class of works out of which mercenary knowledge may be gained. The books with which we are dealing, were written for pleasure, and are read for pleasure. Why? Why is it that the exercise of the imagination gives pleasure, either actively in the making of books, or passively in the reading of them? Because it is a law of man's being that he should strive after perfection, after beauty. As in the making of a garden, so in the making of a book; he must needs take a piece of nature, and fashion it, according to the law of its being, towards a perfection of beauty, which he sees elsewhere in nature, or (what is the same thing) in his own heart. In the imitation—that is, development—of that ideal beauty lies man's heritage of joy.[1] And what, incidentally, makes, with regard to the ordinary life of man, a part of this joy? The fact that in the works of the imagination lies the escape from the cares and sorrows of this life. The Muses, according to Hesiod, were born that they might be 'a forgetfulness

[1] 'All Art is dedicated to Joy, and there is no higher and no more serious problem than how to make men happy. The right Art is that alone, which creates the highest enjoyment.' (Schiller.)

of evils, and a truce from cares.' So that in the reading of books we find a way of escape into happiness.

Thus far, our Subject has turned out to be Abstract. We have, so far as we have gone, made clear what books are, and what reading is, as general propositions What remains to be done with our subject? To explain and to illustrate from one point of view, what books and reading are to *you*. For, that is the only possible way to treat the subject, since you cannot by any means explain what these things are to another person. And it is in the fact of your making clear an individual experience, that the interest of the work will consist. To whom? To those whose imagination is of the same *kind* as your own. To these, then, you address yourself; to these, you relate your personal tastes, preferences—your experiences. Hence it is that from this point, the subject becomes Concrete. Now, what questions are you to ask yourself? What are those books in which I am most interested—which give me most pleasure? In what does that pleasure consist? Or, to put the questions in the form with which we are already familiar:—What is the Impression, or what are the impressions, produced upon my mind? And what things are they that give rise to that impression?

You have now to make up your notes; first, on the Abstract side of the subject; second, on the Concrete. You should by this time be able to perform that simple operation without help.

Then, you are to select your Central Idea. Is it not your Impression, or set of impressions, of the books in which you take most pleasure?

You will find in the Example an excellent model and some useful quotations.

EXAMPLE XIII

DETACHED THOUGHTS ON BOOKS AND READING

CHARLES LAMB. (1775-1834.)

LAST ESSAYS OF ELIA

'To mind the inside of a book is to entertain one's self with the forced product of another man's brain. Now I think a man of quality and breeding may be much amused with the natural sprouts of his own.'

Lord Foppington in the Relapse.

An ingenious acquaintance of my own was so much struck with this bright sally of his Lordship, that he has left off reading altogether, to the great improvement of his originality.[1] At the hazard of losing some credit on this head, I must confess that I dedicate no inconsiderable portion of my time to other people's thoughts. I dream away my life in others' speculations. I love to lose myself in other men's minds. When I am not walking, I am reading; I cannot sit and think. Books think for me.

I have no repugnances. Shaftesbury is not too genteel for me, nor Jonathan Wild too low. I can read anything which I call a *book*. There are things in that shape which I cannot allow for such.[2]

In this catalogue of *books which are no books—biblia a biblia*—I reckon Court Calendars, Directories, Pocket Books, Draught Boards, bound and lettered on the back, Scientific Treatises, Almanacks, Statutes at Large; the works of Hume, Gibbon, Robertson, Beattie, Soame Jenyns, and, generally, all those volumes which 'no gentleman's library

[1] Ironical.

[2] An example of the author's trick of wedging a series of short sentences between long periods; which has the effect of quickening the reader's attention.

should be without' : the Histories of Flavius Josephus (that learned Jew), and Paley's Moral Philosophy. With these exceptions, I can read almost anything. I bless my stars for a taste so catholic, so unexcluding.

I confess that it moves my spleen to see these *things in books' clothing* perched upon shelves, like false saints, usurpers of true shrines, intruders into the sanctuary, thrusting out the legitimate occupants. To reach down a well-bound semblance of a volume, and hope it some kind-hearted play-book, then, opening what 'seem its leaves,' to come bolt upon a withering Population Essay.[1] To expect a Steele, or a Farquhar, and find—Adam Smith.[1] To view a well-arranged assortment of blockheaded Encyclopædias (Anglicanas or Metropolitanas) set out in an array of Russia, or Morocco, when a tithe of that good leather would comfortably re-clothe my shivering folios ; would renovate Paracelsus himself, and enable old Raymund Lully to look like himself again in the world. I never see these impostors, but I long to strip them, to warm my ragged veterans in their spoils.

To be strong-backed and neat-bound is the desideratum of a volume. Magnificence comes after. This, when it can be afforded, is not to be lavished upon all kinds of books indiscriminately. I would not dress a set of Magazines, for instance, in full suit. The dishabille, or half-binding (with Russia backs ever) is *our* costume. A Shakspeare, or a Milton (unless the first editions), it were mere foppery to trick out in gay apparel. The possession of them confers no distinction. The exterior of them (the things themselves being so common), strange to say, raises no sweet emotions, no tickling sense of property in the owner. Thomson's Seasons, again, looks best (I maintain it)[2] a little torn, and dog's-eared. How beautiful to a genuine lover of reading are the sullied leaves, and worn-out appearance, nay, the very odour (beyond Russia), if we would not forget kind

[1] Epigrammatic.
[2] Example of effective use of brackets.

feelings in fastidiousness, of an old 'Circulating Library' Tom Jones, or Vicar of Wakefield![1] How they speak of the thousand thumbs, that have turned over their pages with delight!—of the lone sempstress, whom they have cheered (milliner, or harder-working mantua-maker) after her long day's needle-toil, running far into midnight, when she has snatched an hour, ill-spared from sleep, to steep her cares, as in some Lethean cup, in spelling out their enchanting contents![1] Who would have them a whit less soiled? What better condition could we desire to see them in?[2] . . .

Shall I be thought fantastical, if I confess, that the names of some of our poets sound sweeter, and have a finer relish to the ear—to mine, at least—than that of Milton or of Shakspeare? It may be, that the latter are more staled and rung upon in common discourse. The sweetest names, and which[3] carry a perfume in the mention, are, Kit Marlowe, Drayton, Drummond of Hawthornden, and Cowley.

Much depends upon *when* and *where* you read a book. In the five or six impatient minutes, before the dinner is quite ready, who would think of taking up the Fairy Queen for a stop-gap, or a volume of Bishop Andrewes' sermons?

Milton almost requires a solemn service of music to be played before you enter upon him. But he brings his music, to which, who listens, had need bring docile thoughts, and purged ears.

Winter evenings—the world shut out—with less of cere-

[1] Exclamation.

[2] Interrogation. 'A figurative use to convey a feeling or an opinion in the form of a question. . . . Either the answer is obvious, and the question intended merely to give a turn to the reader's reflections, or the question is intended to call attention to a topic and prepare the reader's mind for an answer which the writer proceeds to give.' (Minto.)

[3] Incorrect use of the relative: 'and' can only refer to a preceding 'which,' that does not here exist. Omit 'and.'

mony the gentle Shakspeare enters. At such a season, the Tempest, or his own Winter's Tale—[1]

These two poets you cannot avoid reading aloud—to yourself, or (as it chances) to some single person listening. More than one—and it [2] degenerates into an audience.

Books of quick interest, that hurry on for incidents, are for the eye to glide over only. It will not do to read them out. I could never listen to even the better kind of modern novels without extreme irksomeness. . . .

I am not much a friend to out-of-doors reading. I cannot settle my spirits to it. I knew a Unitarian minister, who was generally to be seen upon Snow-hill (as yet Skinner's-street *was not*), between the hours of ten and eleven in the morning, studying a volume of Lardner. I own this to have been a strain of abstraction beyond my reach. I used to admire how he sidled along, keeping clear of secular contacts. An illiterate encounter with a porter's knot or a bread basket, would have quickly put to flight all the theology I am master of, and have left me worse than indifferent to the five points. . . .

The Central Idea of our author, you see, is in the main the same as your own. He heads his essay with a quotation that—ironically—misses the whole point of the matter which the essay endeavours to make plain. It is a sort of illustration by contradiction; and the author makes it serve as his Introduction. He incidentally raises the point (which we have overlooked) of the mental laziness which the habit of reading without reflection, is apt to induce. To read without thought is to drug yourself. To read with the faculties alert, has

[1] Aposiopesis. A figure of speech in which the sentence, for the sake of effect, is purposely left incomplete.

[2] 'It.' What? Either the *occasion* degenerates into a recital before an audience; or, the *hearers*—the 'more than one'—degenerate into an audience. A doubtful licence in Brachylogy; that is, an abridged form of expression.

been called a noble exercise of the mind. Charles Lamb, according to his own account, is quite careless of the said noble exercise; nevertheless, he does himself less than justice; for, few students have read with a keener exercise of the critical faculty—that is, the faculty that weighs, compares, and values.

In the opening of his Argument, he defines what he means by books, by telling you what (in his opinion) are *not* books. Among these, are works of history. The body of the essay is made up, as the title leads you to expect, of detached thoughts, each leading casually to the next, without any definite logical sequence: observations on books which are 'intruders'—on bindings and their associations—on the poets—on the time and place to peruse those masters—on novels—all illustrated by quaint anecdote and quotation.

The wider your range of reading, the more quotation woven into the charming prose of Lamb, will you remark. We all build with stolen bricks. And none has stolen more gracefully than Charles Lamb. There is only one rule with regard to such piracy; if you make as good a use of the spoil as did he from whom you took it, you are justified of the theft.

XIV

ON READING NEW BOOKS

IN the last section, we discussed what we meant by books, and what by reading them. We decided that the kind of books under discussion consisted of works of the imagination; that their single object was to give pleasure; and that the reading thereof was the enjoyment of that pleasure, according to the measure of individual capacity.

Proceeding within these limits, our present Subject deals only with those works of the imagination which are 'new.' What do we mean by new? We mean, those books which are published almost daily, and which are consequently written by our contemporaries. Who are our contemporaries? Those who were born into the same age as we ourselves, and who therefore inherit its peculiar tastes and fashions and ideals—those tastes and fashions and ideals which change with every generation. As to the reading of new books, we are to consult our own experience. The first and most obvious inquiry is, are new books more popular than old? Experience replies that they are. Before examining further into the question, we note that the subject may be called Concrete, in so far as it deals with matters of common knowledge; and Abstract, in so far as it deals with the reasons of the existing state of things; so that our

subject is combined Concrete and Abstract. We therefore treat it by describing, first, what is the state of things as we know it; and second, by explaining and commenting upon the causes thereof.

We know that new books, those which are written by our contemporaries, are read by people in general in preference to the works of dead authors, wholly irrespective of their merits. Such is the plain fact. Any librarian of a 'Circulating Library' will confirm the assertion; probably adding a sarcastic observation upon the quality of the public taste. You may easily illustrate this point by quoting instances. Speaking generally, it is safe to assert that, of the large number of persons who are continually reading new books, an extremely small proportion has ever opened Shakespeare since they left school; where they were obliged to learn by heart the notes in which generations of scholars—at variance on every other point—have agreed to distract attention from the original work. And what is true of our greatest author, is true of lesser writers. People who have never read, and who will never read, the Elizabethan dramatists and poets, the men who wrote in the Golden Age of English literature, will eagerly peruse the works of Mr. —— and Mr.—— (you can supply the names as you will). And so on, and so forth.

Now, what are the reasons for this state of things? In the first place, to what class do these people who insist on reading new books to the exclusion of other works, belong? Are they, for instance, scholars or students? Clearly, they are not. So that we have not to deal with persons who understand literature. The persons with whom we are dealing, form a class that does not profess any knowledge of letters. That is an important consideration. Evidently, then, they are either rich people of leisure, or people who earn their

living in paths quite distinct from any literary way of life. With what object do they read? With the object of gaining pleasure, of course; but, their kind of pleasure is evidently different from the kind to which the lives of scholars and students are dedicated. To understand and to define the particular brand of pleasure sought by 'general readers,' we must first inquire under what circumstances they seek it. If they are rich persons of leisure, they read for the sake of a new distraction, when they are bored with those pursuits which make the life of the idle rich; if they earn their living in some way wholly unconnected with letters—and most ways are—they read for the sake of recreation, for simple amusement. In both cases, they will bring a tired mind to be refreshed. But why, you ask, should a tired mind exclusively demand new books? Is there nothing amusing in the whole range of past literature? The reason is probably this: a weary mind follows the line of least resistance; it knows that a modern novel will deal in a modern—and therefore a familiar—manner, with themes that make no demand upon the intelligence. It realises that the writer is living in the same age as the reader; that they see eye to eye—use the same language—possess the same ideas—in a word, that they understand each other. On the other hand, it feels that, to take an author of (say) the last century, would be an effort, a speculation, a venturing into the unknown. And why risk a disappointment, when what you want lies ready to your hand?

The question naturally arises, does the new book fulfil its object? Does it amuse? Judging by the steady demand for the works of popular authors, it would seem that it does. On the other hand, you are to remember that the reading of new books is chiefly accomplished by women. Most men read nothing save the

newspaper; either they have no time to read new books; or new books fail to amuse them. But, is the amusement afforded by the works under consideration, a beneficial pleasure? What do we mean by beneficial? The question will be easier to settle if it is stated negatively. Is this amusement harmful? Impossible to answer: because this form of recreation may do harm to some, and good to others; may render some more fit for their duty, and others less fit; and because the mere fact of a book being new, does not necessarily imply that it falls into the same category with all other works of the same kind which are published at the same time.

But, if the new book thus fulfils its object, is the habitual reader thereof justified in his tacit conviction that none of the works of past literature would afford him pleasure without effort? or, at least, too little pleasure to reward the effort? Or, is he under a delusion? To answer that question accurately, we must first consider in what the pleasure that is afforded by works of imagination, consists. It consists, in the first place, of elements which are wholly unaffected by the flight of time: the essential elements of the primal human emotions, of love and hate and fear; the element of fate; and in the second place, of the unessential—the accidental—elements of circumstance, of manners and fashions, which are continually changing. So that if our reader finds his pleasure in the essentials of literature, he is mistaken in limiting himself to new books; but if, on the other hand, he finds his pleasure in the unessential and accidental — in 'the clink of teaspoons and the accents of the curate'—he is perfectly right; for these things perish and are forgotten beyond recovery. There is still another element of pleasure to consider. What is it? The element of style: the enjoyment which arises from seeing how a thing is done,

rather than from the contemplation of the completed work; the satisfaction of observing good workmanship. But, the ability to appreciate style presupposes a certain temperament—a habit of mind—which is somewhat rare; and which seldom or never belongs to the exclusive reader of new books; so that we may leave it out of account.

How is it, then, that the reader who would naturally find pleasure in the essentials of literature, persists in his delusion that they are only to be found in new books? The reason lies partly in his lack of training; and partly in his lack of intelligence.

Now you are to make up your notes. Then, select your Central Idea; which you should be able to do without help. Before beginning to write, read the example carefully, and make what use of it you can.

EXAMPLE XIV

ON READING NEW BOOKS

WILLIAM HAZLITT. (1778-1830.)

SKETCHES AND ESSAYS

'And what of this new book, that the whole world make such a rout about?'—STERNE.

I cannot understand the rage manifested by the greater part of the world for reading New Books. If the public had read all those that have gone before, I can conceive how they should not wish to read the same work twice over; but when I consider the countless volumes that lie unopened, unregarded, unread, and unthought-of, I cannot enter into the pathetic complaints that I hear made that Sir Walter writes no more—that the press is idle—that Lord Byron is dead. If I have not read a book before, it is, to all intents and purposes, new to me, whether it was

printed yesterday or three hundred years ago. If it be urged that it has no modern, passing incidents, and is out of date and old-fashioned, then it is so much the newer ; it is farther removed from other works that I have lately read, from the familiar routine of ordinary life, and makes so much more addition to my knowledge. But many people would as soon think of putting on old armour as of taking up a book not published within the last month, or year at the utmost. There is a fashion in reading as well as in dress, which lasts only for the season. One would imagine that books were, like women, the worse for being old ; that they have a pleasure in being read for the first time; that they open their leaves more cordially; that the spirit of enjoyment wears out with the spirit of novelty ; and that, after a certain age, it is high time to put them on the shelf. This conceit seems to be followed up in practice. What is it to me that another—that hundreds or thousands have in all ages read a work ? Is it on this account the less likely to give me pleasure, because it has delighted so many others ? Or can I taste this pleasure by proxy ? Or am I in any degree the wiser for their knowledge ? Yet this might appear to be the inference. *Their* having read the work may be said to act upon us by sympathy, and the knowledge which so many other persons have of its contents deadens our curiosity and interest altogether. We have set aside the subject as one on which others have made up their minds for us (as if we really could have ideas in their heads), and are quite on the alert for the next new work, teeming hot from the press, which we shall be the first to read, criticise, and pass an opinion on.[1] Oh, delightful ![2] To cut open the leaves, to inhale the fragrance of the scarcely dry paper, to examine the type to see who is the printer (which is some clue to the value that is set upon the work), to launch out into regions of

[1] Hazlitt thought it mere pedantry to avoid ending a sentence awkwardly on a preposition.

[2] Exclamation.

thought and invention never trod till now, and to explore characters that never met a human eye before—this is a luxury worth sacrificing a dinner-party, or a few hours of a spare morning to.[1] . . .

Books that are to be written hereafter cannot be criticised by us; those that were written formerly have been critised long ago: but a new book is the property, the prey of ephemeral criticism, which it darts triumphantly upon; there is a raw thin air of ignorance and uncertainty about it, not filled up by any recorded opinion; and curiosity, impertinence, and vanity, rush eagerly into the vacuum. A new book is the fair field for petulance and coxcombry to gather laurels in—the butt set up for roving opinion to aim at. Can we wonder, then, that the circulating libraries are besieged by literary dowagers and their grand-daughters, when a new novel is announced? . . .

There is, therefore, so far, a natural or habitual sympathy between us and the literature of the day, though this is a different consideration from the mere circumstance of novelty. An author now alive has a right to calculate upon the living public: he cannot count upon the dead, nor look forward with much confidence to those that are unborn. Neither,[2] however, is it true that we are eager to read all new books alike: we turn from them with a certain feeling of distaste and distrust, unless they are recommended to us by some peculiar feature or obvious distinction. Only young ladies from the boarding-school, or milliners' girls read all the new novels that come out.[3] It must be spoken of or against; the writer's name must be well known or a great secret; it must be a topic of discourse and a mark for criticism—that is, it must be likely to bring us into notice

[1] Example of the Climax; the sentence rising by degrees to its highest point of signification.

[2] 'Neither' should be 'nor,' in the sense of 'And not.'

[3] This statement may perhaps be regarded as an example of the figure of speech known as Hyperbole; that is, exaggeration for the sake of gaining effect or emphasis.

in some way—or we take no notice of it. There is a mutual and tacit understanding on this head. We can no more read all the new books that appear, than we can read all the old ones that have disappeared from time to time. . . .

We are struck with astonishment at finding a fine moral sentiment or a noble image nervously expressed in an author of the age of Queen Elizabeth ; not considering that, independently of nature and feeling, which are the same in all periods, the writers of that day, who were generally men of education and learning, had such models before them as the one that has been just referred to—were thoroughly acquainted with those masters of classic thought and language, compared with whom, in all that relates to the artificial graces of composition, the most studied of the moderns are little better than Goths and Vandals.[1] It is true, we have lost sight of, and neglected the former, because the latter[2] have, in a great degree, superseded them, as the elevations nearest to us intercept those farthest off ; but our not availing ourselves of this vantage ground is no reason why our forefathers should not (who had not our superfluity of choice), and most assuredly they did study and cherish the precious fragments of antiquity, collected together in their time, 'like sunken wreck and sumless treasuries' ; and while they did this, we need be at no loss to account for any examples of grace, of force, or dignity in their writings, if these must always be traced back to a previous source. One age cannot understand how another could subsist without its lights, as one country thinks every other must be poor for want of its physical productions. This is a narrow and superficial view of the subject : we should by all means rise above it. I am not for devoting the whole of our time to the study of the classics, or of any

[1] A broken-backed sentence, whose slovenly construction and long parenthesis render it obscure.

[2] According to Dr Johnson, the expressions 'former' and 'latter' should be consistently avoided, as tending to obscurity ; since the reader's attention is diverted back to the preceding paragraph.

other set of writers, to the exclusion and neglect of nature but I think we should turn our thoughts enough that way to convince us of the existence of genius and learning before our time, and to cure us of an over-weening conceit of ourselves, and of a contemptuous opinion of the world at large. Every civilised age and country (and of these there is not one but a hundred) has its literature, its arts, its comforts, large and ample, though we may know nothing of them ; nor is it (except for our own sakes) important that we should. . . .

Hazlitt's object, you observe, is rather to attack the class of persons which we have been discussing, than to investigate and explain the causes that made them what they are. He cannot, he says, understand the rage manifested by the greater part of the world for reading New Books. But, he understood it very well, and contemned it. Perceiving the common objection—that an old book 'is out of date and old-fashioned'—which is, as we have seen, a perfectly justifiable argument, within certain limits, Hazlitt invents a sophism[1] to meet it. By using the word 'new' in a slightly different sense, the sense of 'strange,' or 'novel,' he urges that the farther the work in question is 'removed from other works that I have lately read,' the 'newer' it is. This is calculated to annoy—which was our author's object—but it does not meet the objection. He goes on to remark that there is a fashion in reading, which is true; and enlarges maliciously on the fact. He knows well enough that the matter is one of taste, of training, of degrees of intelligence; but, he heartily dislikes the taste, training, and degree of intelligence in question; and sets down 'curiosity, impertinence, and

[1] A false argument, understood to be such by the reasoner himself, and intentionally used to deceive.

vanity,' and the love of novelty for its own sake, in their place. The last consideration we did not discuss; it is doubtful if it exercises as much influence as Hazlitt would have us believe. He admits, however, that there is 'a natural or habitual sympathy between us and the literature of the day,' as we also saw; and (with an eye upon William Hazlitt) that an 'author now alive has a right to calculate upon the living public.' But, he adds, 'only young ladies from the boarding-school, or milliners' girls read all the new novels that come out.' Here, unless times have changed, we may venture to differ from Mr. Hazlitt. Young ladies from 'the' boarding-school make but a small proportion of subscribers to 'the' library; and, as for 'milliners' girls,' poor, hard-worked and ill-paid creatures, they may be left out of account. What Hazlitt means—in his playful way—is, that people will always read the book of an author who is 'known,' in preference to the book of the unknown aspirant. Hazlitt assigns the lowest motive he can discover—the supposition that an acquaintance with the work of a known author is more likely to bring the reader 'into notice'—presumably at a dinner-party. But, our theory of the tired mind following the line of least resistance would seem nearer the truth. You know that A.'s work will entertain you, because it has done so before; why then, risk disappointment with the juvenile efforts of B.?

Our author goes on to comment upon the astonishment with which 'a fine moral sentiment or a noble image' is discovered 'in an author of the age of Queen Elizabeth.' It is doubtful if such astonishment is ever experienced. But, Hazlitt's reflections on the Renaissance writers in question are soundly critical.

We find, you see, more matter for difference than agreement in the Example. Both are useful.

XV

THE LIFE OF A FAMOUS MAN

WHAT do we mean by the Life of a man? We mean, an account of what manner of man he was, and what he did, and—to be precise—what he suffered. Pursue the definition farther. When you say, what manner of man he was, what do you mean? You mean, his character. And what is character? It is the sum of a man's qualities; the result of his several qualities, in their various proportions, acting upon each other, and being acted upon by other characters and by external circumstances. For instance, everyone is aware that no two men are precisely alike. Wherein lies the difference? Do they possess different qualities? Or do they possess the same qualities in different measure? They possess the same qualities in different measure. In ordinary parlance, we call one man honest, and another dishonest; what we mean is, that one has a stronger impulse towards sincerity—the courageous impulse to act in accordance with things as they are, and to face the consequences—than another. The positive expressions—honest, dishonest; courageous, cowardly; generous, mean, and so on—are merely convenient phrases, roughly indicating the greater measure or the less of a given quality.

So that when we have taken accurately the various measures of a man's qualities, we have arrived at an understanding of his character. But, how are we to take accurate measures? In the first place, absolute accuracy is unattainable; because it is that very difference between man and man, which renders precise estimation impossible. You can only see what you bring with you the capacity for seeing. In other words, you can only measure by yourself; so that—allowing a margin for the help of the imagination—at every point of difference that exists between yourself and the other, there will be a proportion of error.

If, however, we cannot hope for an exact likeness, we may still gain a reasonable approximation. How are you to gain that approximation? How are you to discover a man's character—to find out the various proportions which his qualities bear to each other, and to the characters of other men, which will give you the perception of the whole? You discover character by watching it reveal itself. How does character reveal itself? In action: and by action you are to understand every manifestation of emotion—of energy, of feeling—however slight, whether of word or gesture or deed. So that in giving an account of what a man does, and of what he suffers, you give at the same time an account of what he *is*. It is, then, of little use merely to state that such an one is brave, honest, loyal, industrious, and the like; because these general expressions give no measure of proportion; and it is in the measure of proportion that character exists. What then, are you to do? You are to present the character in Action. Shew what the man did, and why he did it, and how he suffered—for suffering is here to be considered as a form of doing.

But here, a difficulty arises. We said that a man's character was the result of the combination of his

several qualities in their various proportions, acting upon each other, and being acted upon by other characters and by external circumstances. What is the difficulty? The difficulty is, that if the character of the man is necessarily affected by the characters of other men and by external circumstances, we cannot truly depict it without giving some account of such other characters and such external circumstances. Taken together, with their acts and consequences, these make up the conditions of the times in which he existed. So that, in making the portrait of any given person, we must include in it some picture of the times in which he lived.

The Subject, then, is both Abstract and Concrete; it is abstract in so far as it deals with theories of motive and the causes which influence the springs of action; concrete in so far as it deals with the actions themselves, with circumstances and the facts of experience. The abstract we must investigate and define; the concrete must be related—that is, presented in a picture—as vividly as possible.

First, then, you are to discover the character of the famous man whom you select, by considering his actions. Having formed an estimate of his character, you shew what manner of man he was, by delineating his actions. But here, another difficulty arises; for a man's work, to which most of his actions are dedicated, is often a thing that stands alone, and reflects but little light upon its originator; and yet his work may make the most notable part of his life. The completed work of a renowned soldier, or a great artist, for instance, is largely impersonal; that is, separate from, outside of, the person who originated it; for although, strictly speaking, while the work was in the making, it was of course the result of his character in action, it only reflects a

part of that character when completed. For instance, did we know nothing of Sir Christopher Wren, save that he designed Saint Paul's Cathedral; this great work of his would witness to no more of his character than that he was possessed of a noble faculty of invention, and a high sense of the beautiful.

How, then, are we to treat our subject, when the life of the man in question is mainly centred in his work? The most convenient method, which is adopted by the great Dr. Johnson in his *Lives of the Poets*, is to treat the subject under the heads of the two divisions into which it naturally falls: the life, considered as a character in action, acting upon the other characters, and the circumstances, which made the life of the time, and being acted upon by them; and the work, considered critically; that is, by comparison with the greatest works of the same kind, and in connection with the period of history during which it was accomplished. There will be no sharp line of cleavage between the two divisions; each will overlap and illustrate the other.

To recapitulate: the life of a man is the presentment of his character by means of the delineation of his actions, which are to be depicted in their connection with the times in which he lived; together with a critical account of his work, taking into consideration the greatest works of the same kind, and the period of history in which it was accomplished. These, then, are the points upon which you are to fix your attention, in reading the following Example with a view to seeing how it is done:—How the character of the subject is revealed by the actions selected for description by the author; how, in the author's view, he was influenced by the times in which he lived; and what was the value of his work.

You are then to decide what was the author's Central

Idea. Having acquainted yourself with these matters, you will have gained an insight into the method of doing this particular kind of work, which you can apply for yourself.

EXAMPLE XV

COWLEY

SAMUEL JOHNSON. (1709-1784.)

LIVES OF THE POETS

The Life of Cowley, notwithstanding the penury of English biography, has been written by Dr. Sprat, an author whose pregnancy of imagination and elegance of language have deservedly set him high in the ranks of literature; but his zeal of friendship, or ambition of eloquence, has produced a funeral oration rather than a history: he has given the character, not the life of Cowley; for he writes with so little detail, that scarcely anything is distinctly known, but all is shewn confused and enlarged through the mist of panegyrick.

Abraham Cowley was born in the year one thousand six hundred and eighteen. His father was a grocer, whose condition Dr. Sprat conceals under the general appellation of a citizen; and, what would probably not have been less carefully suppressed, the omission of his name in the register of St. Dunstan's parish gives reason to suspect that his father was a sectary. Whoever he was, he died before the birth of his son, and consequently left him to the care of his mother; whom Wood represents as struggling earnestly to procure him a literary education, and who, as she lived to the age of eighty, had her solicitude rewarded by seeing her son eminent, and, I hope, by seeing him fortunate, and partaking his prosperity. We know at least, from Sprat's account, that he always acknowledged her care, and justly paid the dues of filial gratitude.

In the window of his mother's apartment lay Spenser's Fairy Queen ; in which he very early took delight to read, till, by feeling the charms of verse, he became, as he relates, irrecoverably a poet. Such are the accidents, which, sometimes remembered, and perhaps sometimes forgotten, produce that particular designation of mind, and propensity for some certain science or employment, which is commonly called Genius. The true Genius is a mind of large general powers, accidentally determined to some particular direction. Sir Joshua Reynolds, the great Painter of the present age, had the first fondness for his art excited by the perusal of Richardson's treatise.

By his mother's solicitation he was admitted into Westminster school, where he was soon distinguished. He was wont, says Sprat, to relate, 'That he had this defect in his memory at that time, that his teachers never could bring it to retain the ordinary rules of grammar.' . . .

Among the English poets, Cowley, Milton, and Pope, might be said 'to lisp in numbers'; and have given such early proofs, not only of powers of language, but of comprehension of things, as to more tardy minds seems scarcely credible. But of the learned puerilities of Cowley there is no doubt, since a volume of his poems was not only written but printed in his thirteenth year ; containing, with other poetical compositions, 'The Tragical History of Pyramus and Thisbe,' written when he was ten years old ; and 'Constantia and Philetus,' written two years after.

Whilst he was yet at school he produced a comedy called 'Love's Riddle,' though it was not published till he had been some time at Cambridge. This comedy is of the pastoral kind, which requires no acquaintance with the living world, and therefore the time at which it was composed adds little to the wonders of Cowley's minority.

In 1636, he was removed to Cambridge ; where he continued his studies with great intenseness ; for he is said to have written, while he was yet a young student, the greater part of his Davideis ; a work of which the materials could

not have been collected without the study of many years, but by a mind of the greatest vigour and activity.

Two years after his settlement at Cambridge he published 'Love's Riddle,' with a poetical dedication to Sir Kenelm Digby; of whose acquaintance all his contemporaries seem to have been ambitious; and 'Naufragium Joculare,' a comedy written in Latin, but without due attention to the ancient models: for it is not loose verse, but mere prose. It was printed, with a dedication in verse to Dr. Comber, master of the college; but having neither the facility of a popular nor the accuracy of a learned work, it seems to be now universally neglected.

At the beginning of the civil war, as the Prince passed through Cambridge in his way to York, he was entertained with the representation of the 'Guardian,' a comedy, which Cowley says was neither written nor acted, but rough-drawn by him, and repeated by the scholars. That this comedy was printed during his absence from his country, he appears to have considered as injurious to his reputation;[1] though, during the suppression of the theatres, it was sometimes privately acted with sufficient approbation.

In 1643, being now master of arts, he was, by the prevalence of the parliament, ejected from Cambridge, and sheltered himself at St. John's College in Oxford; where, as is said by Wood, he published a satire called 'The Puritan and Papist,' which was only inserted in the last collection of his works; and so distinguished himself by the warmth of his loyalty, and the elegance of his conversation, that he gained the kindness and confidence of those who attended the King, and amongst others of Lord Falkland, whose notice cast a lustre on all to whom it was extended.

About the time when Oxford was surrendered to the

[1] Inversion of the natural order of the sentence, for the sake of emphasis: the beginning and end of a sentence or paragraph being appropriate for emphasis, as the reader's attention is—theoretically—alert at the beginning, drooping in the middle, and awaking again at the conclusion.

parliament, he followed the Queen to Paris, where he became secretary to the Lord Jermin, afterwards Earl of St. Albans, and was employed in such correspondence as the royal cause required, and particularly in cyphering and decyphering the letters that passed between the King and Queen; an employment of the highest confidence and honour. So wide was his province of intelligence, that, for several years, it filled all his days and two or three nights in the week.

In the year 1647, his 'Mistress' was published; for he imagined, as he declared in his preface to a subsequent edition, that 'poets are scarce thought freemen of their company without paying some duties, or obliging themselves to be true to Love.'

This obligation to amorous ditties owes, I believe, its original to the fame of Petrarch, who, in an age rude and uncultivated, by his tuneful homage to his Laura, refined the manners of the lettered world, and filled Europe with love and poetry. But the basis of all excellence is truth:[1] he that professes love ought to feel its power. Petrarch was a real lover, and Laura doubtless deserved his tenderness. Of Cowley, we are told by Barnes, who had means enough of information, that, whatever he may talk of his own inflammability, and the variety of characters by which his heart was divided, he in reality was in love but once, and then never had resolution to tell his passion. . . .

At Paris, as secretary to Lord Jermin, he was engaged in transacting things of real importance with real men and real women, and at that time did not much employ his thoughts upon phantoms of gallantry. Some of his letters to Mr. Bennet, afterwards Earl of Arlington, from April to December in 1650, are preserved in 'Miscellanea Aulica,' a collection of papers published by Brown. These letters, being written like those of other men whose mind is more on things than words, contribute no otherwise to his reputation than as they shew him to have been above the affecta-

[1] A maxim upon which the Doctor often dwelt.

tion of unseasonable elegance, and to have known that the business of a statesman can be little forwarded by flowers of rhetorick. . . .

Some years afterwards, 'business,' says Sprat, 'passed of course into other hands'; and Cowley, being no longer useful at Paris, was in 1656 sent back into England, that, 'under pretence of privacy and retirement, he might take occasion of giving notice of the posture of things in this nation.'

Soon after his return to London, he was seized by some messengers of the usurping powers, who were sent out in quest of another man; and, being examined, was put into confinement, from which he was not dismissed without the security of a thousand pounds given by Dr. Scarborow.

This year he published his poems, with a preface, in which he seems to have inserted something, suppressed in subsequent editions, which was interpreted to denote some relaxation of his loyalty. In this preface he declares, that 'his desire had been for some days past, and did still very vehemently continue, to retire himself to some of the American plantations, and to forsake this world for ever.'

From the obloquy which the appearance of submission to the usurpers brought upon him, his biographer has been very diligent to clear him, and indeed it does not seem to have lessened his reputation. His wish for retirement we can easily believe to be undissembled; a man harassed in one kingdom, and persecuted in another, who, after a course of business that employed all his days and half his nights in cyphering and decyphering, comes to his own country and steps into a prison, will be willing enough to retire to some place of quiet, and of safety.[1] Yet let neither our reverence for a genius, nor our pity for a sufferer, dispose us to forget that, if his activity was virtue, his retreat was cowardice.

He then took upon himself the character of Physician,

[1] Periodic structure; in which, for the sake of emphasis, the meaning is held in suspense until the last clause.

still, according to Sprat, with intention 'to dissemble the main design of his coming over,' and as Mr. Wood relates, 'complying with the men then in power (which was much taken notice of by the royal party), he obtained an order to be created Doctor of Physick, which being done to his mind (whereby he gained the ill-will of some of his friends), he went into France again, having made a copy of verses on Oliver's death.' . . .

There is reason to think that Cowley promised little. It does not appear that his compliance gained him confidence enough to be trusted without security, for the bond of his bail was never cancelled; nor that it made him think himself secure, for at that dissolution of government, which followed the death of Oliver, he returned into France, where he resumed his former station, and staid till the Restoration. . . .

At the Restoration, after all the diligence of his long service, and with consciousness not only of the merit of fidelity, but of the dignity of great abilities, he naturally expected ample preferments; and, that he might not be forgotten by his own fault, wrote a Song of Triumph. But this was a time of such general hope, that great numbers were inevitably disappointed; and Cowley found his reward very tediously delayed. He had been promised by both Charles the first and second the Mastership of the Savoy; but 'he lost it,' says Wood, 'by certain persons, enemies to the Muses.'

The neglect of the court was not his only mortification; having, by such alteration as he thought proper, fitted his old Comedy of 'The Guardian' for the stage, he produced it to the publick under the title of 'The Cutter of Coleman-street.' It was treated on the stage with great severity, and was afterwards censured as a satire on the king's party.

Mr. Dryden, who went with Mr. Sprat to the first exhibition, related to Mr. Dennis, 'that when they told Cowley how little favour had been shewn him, he received the news

of his ill success not with so much firmness[1] as might have been expected from so great a man.' . . .

That he might shorten this tedious suspense, he published his pretensions and his discontent, in an ode called 'The Complaint'; in which he styles himself the *melancholy* Cowley. This met with the usual fortune of complaints, and seems to have excited more contempt than pity. . . .

His vehement desire of retirement now came again upon him. 'Not finding,' says the morose Wood, 'that preferment conferred upon him which he expected, while others for their money carried away most places, he retired discontented into Surrey.'

'He was now,' says the courtly Sprat, 'weary of the vexations and formalities of an active condition. He had been perplexed with a long compliance to foreign manners. He was satiated with the arts of a court; which sort of life, though his virtue made it innocent to him, yet nothing could make it quiet. Those were the reasons that moved him to follow the violent inclination of his own mind, which, in the greatest throng of his former business, had still called upon him, and represented to him the true delights of solitary studies, of temperate pleasures, and a moderate revenue below the malice and flatteries of fortune.'

So differently are things seen, and so differently are they shewn; but actions are visible, though motives are secret. Cowley certainly retired; first to Barn-elms, and afterwards to Chertsey in Surrey. He seems, however, to have lost part of his dread of the *hum of men*. He thought himself now safe enough from intrusion, without the defence of mountains and oceans; and, instead of seeking shelter in America, wisely went only so far from the bustle of life as that he might easily find his way back, when solitude should grow tedious. His retreat was at first but slenderly

[1] Read :—'he did not receive the news of his ill success with so much firmness,' etc.

accommodated ;[1] yet he soon obtained, by the interest of the Earl of St. Albans and the Duke of Buckingham, such a lease of the Queen's lands as afforded him an ample income. . . .

He did not long enjoy the pleasure or suffer the uneasiness of solitude ; for he died at the Porch-house in Chertsey in 1667, in the 49th year of his age.

He was buried with great pomp near Chaucer and Spenser ; and King Charles pronounced, 'That Mr. Cowley had not left a better man behind him in England.' . . .

Cowley, like other poets who have written with narrow views, and,[2] instead of tracing intellectual pleasure to its natural sources in the mind of man, paid their court to temporary prejudices, has been at one time too much praised, and too much neglected at another.

Wit, like all other things subject by their nature to the choice of man, has its changes and fashions, and at different times takes different forms. About the beginning of the seventeenth century appeared a race of writers that may be termed the metaphysical poets ; of whom, in a criticism on the works of Cowley, it is not improper to give some account.

The metaphysical poets were men of learning, and to shew their learning was their whole endeavour ; but, unluckily resolving to shew it in rhyme, instead of writing poetry, they only wrote verses, and very often such verses as stood the trial of the finger better than of the ear ; for the modulation was so imperfect, that they were only found to be verses by counting the syllables.

If the father of criticism has rightly denominated poetry *τέχνη μιμητική, an imitative art*,[3] these writers will, without great wrong, lose their right to the name of poets ; for they cannot be said to have imitated any thing ; they

[1] Scantily supplied with the means of comfortable subsistence.
[2] Read : —'and who,' etc.
[3] *See* Section XVIII.

neither copied nature nor life; neither painted the forms of matter, nor represented the operations of intellect.

Those however who deny them to be poets, allow them to be wits. Dryden confesses of himself and his contemporaries, that they fall below Donne in wit, but maintains that they surpass him in poetry.

If Wit be well described by Pope, as being 'that which has been often thought, but was never before so well expressed,'[1] they certainly never attained, nor ever sought it; for they endeavoured to be singular in their thoughts, and were careless of their diction. But Pope's account of wit is undoubtedly erroneous; he depresses it below its natural dignity, and reduces it from strength of thought to happiness of language.

If by a more noble and more adequate conception that be considered as Wit, which is at once natural and new, that which, though not obvious, is, upon its first production, acknowledged to be just; if it be that, which he that never found it, wonders how he missed; to wit of this kind the metaphysical poets have seldom risen. Their thoughts are often new, but seldom natural; they are not obvious, but neither are they just; and the reader, far from wondering that he missed them, wonders more frequently by what perverseness of industry they were ever found. . . .

Of all the passages in which poets have exemplified their own precepts, none will easily be found of greater excellence than that in which Cowley condemns exuberance of Wit:

'Yet 'tis not to adorn and gild each part,
That shews more cost than art.
Jewels at nose and lips but ill appear;
Rather than all things wit, let none be there.
Several lights will not be seen,
If there be nothing else between.
Men doubt, because they stand so thick i' th' sky,
If those be stars which paint the galaxy.'

[1] *See* Section XXI.

. . . The fault of Cowley, and perhaps of all the writers of the metaphysical race, is that of pursuing his thoughts to their last ramifications, by which he loses the grandeur of generality ; for of the greatest things the parts are little ; what is little can be but pretty, and by claiming dignity becomes ridiculous. Thus all the power of description is destroyed by a scrupulous enumeration ; and the force of metaphors is lost, when the mind by the mention of particulars is turned more upon the original than the secondary sense, more upon that from which the illustration is drawn than that to which it is applied. . . .

Cowley, whatever was his subject, seems to have been carried, by a kind of destiny, to the light and the familiar, or to conceits which require still more ignoble epithets. A slaughter in the Red Sea, *new dies the waters name ;* and England, during the Civil War, was *Albion no more, nor to be named from white*. . . .

One of the great sources of poetical delight is description, or the power of presenting pictures to the mind. Cowley gives inferences instead of images, and shews not what may be supposed to have been seen, but what thoughts the sight might have suggested. . . .

Cowley says of the stone with which Cain slew his brother,

'I saw him sling the stone, as if he meant
At once his murther and his monument.'

Of the sword taken from Goliah, he says,

'A sword so great, that it was only fit
To cut off his great head that came with it.'

. . . His expressions have sometimes a degree of meanness that surpasses expectation :

'Nay, gentle guests, he cries, since now you're in,
The story of your gallant friend begin.'

In a simile descriptive of the Morning :

'As glimmering stars just at th' approach of day,
Cashier'd by troops, at last drop all away.'

The dress of Gabriel deserves attention :

'He took for skin a cloud most soft and bright,
That e'er the midday sun pierc'd through with light,
Upon his cheeks a lively blush he spread,
Wash'd from the morning beauties deepest red ;
An harmless flattering meteor shone for hair ;
And fell adown his shoulders with loose care ;
He cuts out a silk mantle from the skies,
Where the most sprightly azure pleas'd the eyes ;
This he with starry vapours sprinkles all,
Took in their prime ere they grow ripe and fall ;
Of a new rainbow, ere it fret or fade,
The choicest piece cut out, a scarfe is made.'

This is a just specimen of Cowley's imagery : what might in general expressions be great and forcible, he weakens and makes ridiculous by branching it into small parts. That Gabriel was invested with the softest or brightest colours of the sky, we might have been told, and been dismissed to improve the idea in our different proportions of conception ; but Cowley could not let us go till he had related where Gabriel got first his skin, and then his mantle, then his lace, and then his scarfe, and related it in the terms of the mercer and taylor. . . .

After so much criticism on his 'Poems,' the 'Essays'[1] which accompany them must not be forgotten. What is said by Sprat of his conversation, that no man could draw from it any suspicion of his excellence in poetry, may be applied to these compositions. No author ever kept his verse and his prose at a greater distance from each other. His thoughts are natural, and his style has a smooth and placid equability, which has never yet obtained its due commendation. Nothing is far-sought, or hard-laboured ; but all is easy without feebleness, and familiar without grossness.

It has been observed by Felton, in his 'Essay on the Classicks,' that Cowley was beloved by every Muse that he courted ; and that he has rivalled the Ancients in every kind of poetry but tragedy.

[1] *See* Section XII.

It may be affirmed, without any encomiastick fervour, that he brought to his poetick labours a mind replete with learning, and that his pages are embellished with all the ornaments which books could supply ; that he was the first who imparted to English numbers the enthusiasm of the greater ode, and the gaiety of the less ; that he was equally qualified for spritely sallies, and for lofty flights ; that he was among those who freed translation from servility, and instead of following his author at a distance, walked by his side ; and that if he left versification yet improvable, he left likewise from time to time such specimens of excellence as enabled succeeding poets to improve it.

In his Introduction, Dr. Johnson observes that the former biographer of Cowley, Dr. Sprat, had fallen into the very mistake, which, in our preliminary consideration of the subject, we were careful to guard against. 'He writes,' says Dr. Johnson, 'with so little detail, that scarcely anything is distinctly known, but all is shewn confused and enlarged through the mist of panegyrick.' In other words, Dr. Sprat, instead of delineating the character of his subject by shewing it in action, preferred to apply laudatory adjectives to it, by way of description ; an easy but futile method.

Dr. Johnson begins by relating the circumstances into which Cowley was born—date, parentage, education. In his account of the boy accidentally falling upon Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, we gain the first suggestion of the biographer's Central Idea: how, through all the changes and chances of his life, Cowley turned inevitably to poetry. And here, also, we have Dr. Johnson's famous definition of Genius. In continued illustration of his central idea, the author tells us of Cowley's early impulses towards the making of verse—his 'learned puerilities,' the Doctor calls them ; and of his compositions as a student.

When Cowley had completed his studies at the University, he began to mingle with his fellows in the great world; and accordingly, his biographer gives just so much information with regard to Cowley's illustrious friends, and the circumstances in which they moved, as to render the narrative intelligible. Dr. Johnson goes on to shew how Cowley, though deeply engaged in the politics of the day, never lost his taste for letters; and how he attained his ambition, which was to retire from public life, in order, as Dr. Sprat puts it, 'to follow the violent inclination of his own mind.' The way in which he gained his end reveals, according to the Doctor, certain deplorable points of character; and he relates how, after a brief return to society, Cowley again retired into the country, where he remained until his death. 'Actions,' says Dr. Johnson, 'are visible, though motives are secret'; and the Doctor is here contented to record the actions, and to leave the imputation of motives to his readers. There follows the Doctor's criticism of Cowley's work in verse and prose; introduced by a disquisition upon the class of literature to which he assigned the work of Cowley. For, since each kind of literature has its own standards, it is necessary, before judging any given work, to state what these are.

And in every other kind of work, whether of statesman, or soldier, teacher or maker, the rule holds good; before criticising it, you are to discover and to define the principles which regulate the particular standard of excellence of the class to which the work in question belongs.

Having stated these, Dr. Johnson goes on to try the work of Cowley in accordance with them. He does so generally and in detail, at much greater length than is here quoted; but the passages cited will both serve to illustrate the method of one of the greatest critics

that ever lived, and the curiously ingenious kind of poetry by which Abraham Cowley earned his renown. In his conclusion, Dr. Johnson sums up his judgment, and delivers his verdict.

Dr. Johnson's weighty and impressive style remains a monument of English. He chiefly used what is called the Balanced Sentence; which, says Professor Minto, 'consists in taking words expressive of ideas that are meant to be compared or contrasted, and planting them in corresponding grammatical places, in similarly constructed phrases or clauses or sentences. . . . Johnson is a vigorous master of the art. The force of the structure may be felt in the concrete in any of his "Lives of the Poets," a work which, with all its limitations, still remains the most instructive body of criticism in our language. For example:—"Addison thinks justly, but he thinks faintly." "His prose is the model of the middle style; on grave subjects not formal, on light occasions not grovelling; pure without scrupulosity, and exact without elaboration." . . . The basis of its use in exposition is the value of comparison and contrast for making ideas clear. If we wish to obtain a precise idea of anything, we must compare and contrast it with the things that are most like it in nature; in this way only can we apprehend its precise character. This is the rationale of the matter of a balanced sentence. We must say what a thing is not as well as what it is, if we would be clearly understood; and comparison of nearly allied things one with another is more instructive than the comparison of things wide as the poles asunder.'[1]

[1] *Principles of Prose Composition.* Minto.

ON HISTORY

THIS is an exercise designed to enable you to learn what a great writer has to tell you with regard to a given subject, rather than to induce you to find out something of its nature for yourself. You will thus gain a piece of valuable knowledge. For, Carlyle's essay does not consist of detached thoughts upon history, or a record of personal impressions with regard to it, although these are tenable points of view; but, he devotes a considerable intellect to the task of analysing and explaining the nature of History; what it is; and how its knowledge ought to be pursued. These matters make up his Central Idea; which might be called the Uses of Learning History. It is suggested in his Introduction, which ends at the conclusion of the second paragraph. The Argument elucidates it, point by point. The Conclusion of which the last paragraph consists, summarises the Argument.

You are to study the essay until you have thoroughly grasped its import and its chain of reasoning; then, make notes of the principal points; then, write a clear account of Carlyle's view of the matter as you conceive it, in your own words, as concisely as possible. The exercise will be of great use to you, not only because it

in gratifying. Whether, with the stateliness of that venerable character, she may not have taken up something of its austerity and frigidity; whether in the logical terseness of a Hume or Robertson, the graceful ease and gay pictorial heartiness of a Herodotus or Froissart may not be wanting, is not the question for us here.[1] Enough that all learners, all inquiring minds of every order, are gathered round her footstool, and reverently pondering her lessons, as the true basis of Wisdom. Poetry, Divinity, Politics, Physics, have each their adherents and adversaries; each little guild supporting a defensive and offensive war for its own special domain; while the domain of History is as a Free Emporium, where all these belligerents peaceably meet and furnish themselves; and Sentimentalist and Utilitarian, Sceptic, and Theologian, with one voice advise us: Examine History, for it is 'Philosophy teaching by Experience.'

Far be it from us to disparage such teaching, the very attempt at which must be precious. Neither shall we too rigidly inquire: How much it has hitherto profited? Whether most of what little practical wisdom men have, has come from study of professed History, or from other less boasted sources, whereby, as matters now stand, a Marlborough may become great in the world's business, with no History save what he derives from Shakspeare's Plays? Nay, whether in that same teaching by Experience, historical Philosophy has yet properly deciphered the first element of all science in this kind: What the aim and significance of that wondrous changeful Life it investigates and paints may be? Whence the course of man's destinies in this Earth originated, and whither they are tending? Or, indeed, if they have any course and tendency, are really guided forward by an unseen mysterious Wisdom, or only circle in blind mazes without recognisable guidance? Which questions, altogether fundamental, one might think, in any

[1] The two questions are treated grammatically as one question; a common usage.

Philosophy of History, have, since the era when Monkish Annalists were wont to answer them by the long-ago extinguished light of their Missal and Breviary, been by most philosophical Historians only glanced at dubiously and from afar ; by many, not so much as glanced at.

The truth is, two difficulties, never wholly surmountable, lie in the way. Before Philosophy can teach by experience, the Philosophy has to be in readiness, the Experience must be gathered and intelligibly recorded. Now, overlooking the former consideration, and with regard only to the latter, let any one who has examined the current of human affairs, and how intricate, perplexed, unfathomable, even when seen into with our own eyes, are their thousandfold blending movements, say whether the true representing of it is easy or impossible. Social Life is the aggregate of all the individual men's Lives who constitute society ; History is the essence of innumerable Biographies. But if one Biography, nay, our own Biography, study and recapitulate it as we may, remains in so many points unintelligible to us ; how much more must these million, the very facts of which, to say nothing of the purport of them, we know not, and cannot know !

Neither will it adequately avail us to assert that the general inward condition of Life is the same in all ages ; and that only the remarkable deviations from the common endowment and common lot, and the more important variations which the outward figure of Life has from time to time undergone, deserve memory and record. The inward condition of Life, it may rather be affirmed, the conscious or half-conscious aim of mankind, so far as men are not mere digesting-machines, is the same in no two ages ; neither are the more important outward variations easy to fix on, or always well capable of representation. Which was the greatest innovator, which was the more important personage in man's history, he who first led armies over the Alps, and gained the victories of Cannæ and Thrasymene ; or the nameless boor who first hammered out for himself an

iron spade? When the oak-tree is felled, the whole forest echoes with it; but a hundred acorns are planted silently by some unnoticed breeze. Battles and war-tumults, which for the time din every ear, and with joy or terror intoxicate every heart, pass away like tavern-brawls; and, except some few Marathons and Morgartens, are remembered by accident, not by desert. Laws themselves, political Constitutions, are not our life, but only the house wherein our Life is led: nay, they are but the bare walls of the house: all whose essential furniture, the inventions and traditions, and daily habits that regulate and support our existence, are the work not of Dracos and Hampdens, but of Phœnician mariners, of Italian masons and Saxon metallurgists, of philosophers, alchymists, prophets, and all the long-forgotton train of artists and artisans; who from the first have been jointly teaching us how to think and how to act, how to rule over spiritual and over physical Nature. Well may we say that of our History the more important part is lost without recovery; and,—as thanksgivings were once wont to be offered 'for unrecognised mercies,'—look with reverence into the dark untenanted places of the Past, where, in formless oblivion, our chief benefactors, with all their sedulous endeavours, but not with the fruit of these, lie entombed.

So imperfect is that same Experience, by which Philosophy is to teach. Nay, even with regard to those occurrences which do stand recorded, which, at their origin have seemed worthy of record, and the summary of which constitutes what we now call History, is not our understanding of them altogether incomplete; is it even possible to represent them as they were? The old story of Sir Walter Raleigh's looking from his prison-window, on some street tumult, which afterwards three witnesses reported in three different ways, himself differing from them all, is still a true lesson for us. Consider how it is that historical documents and records originate; even honest records, where the reporters were unbiased by personal regard; a case which, were nothing more wanted, must ever be among the rarest.

The real leading features of a historical Transaction, those movements that essentially characterise it, and alone deserve to be recorded, are nowise the foremost to be noted. At first, among the various witnesses, who are also parties interested, there is only vague wonder, and fear or hope, and the noise of Rumour's thousand tongues; till, after a season, the conflict of testimonies has subsided into some general issue; and then it is settled, by majority of votes, that such and such a 'Crossing of the Rubicon,' an 'Impeachment of Strafford,' a 'Convocation of the Notables,' are epochs in the world's history, cardinal points on which grand world-revolutions have hinged. Suppose, however, that the majority of votes was all wrong; that the real cardinal points lay far deeper: and had been passed over unnoticed, because no Seer, but only mere Onlookers, chanced to be there! Our clock strikes when there is a change from hour to hour; but no hammer in the Horologe of Time peals through the universe when there is a change from Era to Era. Men understand not what is among their hands: as calmness is the characteristic of strength, so the weightiest causes may be most silent. It is, in no case, the real historical Transaction, but only some more or less plausible scheme and theory of the Transaction, or the harmonised result of many such schemes, each varying from the other and all varying from truth, that we can ever hope to behold. . . . .

Such considerations truly were of small profit, did they, instead of teaching us vigilance and reverent humility in our inquiries into History, abate our esteem for them, or discourage us from unweariedly prosecuting them. Let us search more and more into the Past; let all men explore it, as the true fountain of knowledge; by whose light alone, consciously or unconsciously employed, can the Present and the Future be interpreted or guessed at. For though the whole meaning lies far beyond our ken, yet in that complex Manuscript,[1] covered over with formless inextricably-entangled unknown characters,—nay, which is

[1] Metaphorical.

a *Palimpsest*,[1] and had once prophetic writing, still dimly legible there,—some letters, some words, may be deciphered; and if no complete Philosophy, here and there an intelligible precept, available in practice, be gathered: well understanding, in the meanwhile, that it is only a little portion we have deciphered; that much still remains to be interpreted; that History is a real Prophetic Manuscript, and can be fully interpreted by no man. . . .

Doubtless also, it is with a growing feeling of the infinite nature of History, that in these times, the old principle, division of labour, has been so widely applied to it. The Political Historian, once almost the sole cultivator of History, has now found various associates, who strive to elucidate other phases of human Life; of which, as hinted above, the political conditions it is passed under are but one, and though the primary, perhaps not the most important, of the many outward arrangements. Of this Historian himself, moreover, in his own special department, new and higher things are beginning to be expected. From of old, it was too often to be reproachfully observed of him, that he dwelt with disproportionate fondness in Senate-houses, in Battle-fields, nay, even in Kings' Antechambers; forgetting, that far away from such scenes, the mighty tide of Thought and Action was still rolling on its wondrous course, in gloom and brightness; and in its thousand remote valleys, a whole world of Existence, with or without an earthly sun of Happiness to warm it, with or without a heavenly sun of Holiness to purify and sanctify it, was blossoming and fading, whether the 'famous victory' were won or lost.[2] The time seems coming when much of this

[1] A parchment or other writing material written upon twice, the original writing having been erased, wholly or in part, to make room for the second.

[2] A metaphorical piece of writing which may perhaps be described as belonging to that figure of speech known as Vision; in which the writer describes a scene as though it lay before his eyes.

must be amended ; and he who sees no world but that of courts and camps ; and writes only how soldiers were drilled and shot, and how this ministerial conjuror out-conjured that other, and then guided, or at least held, something which he called the rudder of Government, but which was rather the spigot of Taxation, wherewith, in place of steering, he could tap, and the more cunningly the nearer the lees,— will pass for a more or less instructive Gazetteer, but will no longer be called a Historian.

However, the Political Historian, were his work performed with all conceivable perfection, can accomplish but a part, and still leaves room for numerous fellow-labourers. Foremost among these comes the Ecclesiastical Historian ; endeavouring, with catholic or sectarian view, to trace the progress of the Church ; of that portion of the social establishments, which respects our religious condition ; as the other portion does our civil, or rather, in the long-run, our economical condition. Rightly conducted, this department were undoubtedly the more important of the two ; inasmuch as it concerns us more to understand how man's moral well-being had been and might be promoted, than to understand in the like sort his physical well-being ; which latter is ultimately the aim of all Political arrangements. . . .

Church History, then, did it speak wisely, would have momentous secrets to teach us : nay, in its highest degree, it were a sort of continued Holy Writ ; our Sacred Books being, indeed, only a History of the primeval Church, as it first arose in man's soul, and symbolically embodied itself in his external life. How far our actual Church Historians fall below such unattainable standards, nay, below quite attainable approximations thereto, we need not point out. Of the Ecclesiastical Historian we have to complain, as we did of his Political fellow-craftsman, that his inquiries turn rather on the outward mechanism, the mere hulls and superficial accidents of the object, than on the object itself : as if the Church lay in Bishops' Chapter-

houses, and Œcumenic Council-halls, and Cardinals' Conclaves, and not far more in the hearts of Believing Men; in whose walk and conversation, as influenced thereby, its chief manifestations were to be looked for, and its progress or decline ascertained. The History of the Church is a History of the Invisible as well as of the Visible Church; which latter, if disjoined from the former, is but a vacant edifice; gilded, it may be, and overhung with old votive gifts, yet useless, nay, pestilentially unclean; to write whose history is less important than to forward its downfall.

Of a less ambitious character are the Histories that relate to special separate provinces of human Action; to Sciences, Practical Arts, Institutions and the like; matters which do not imply an epitome of man's whole interest and form of life; but wherein, though each is still connected with all, the spirit of each, at least its material results, may be in some degree evolved without so strict a reference to that of the others. Highest in dignity and difficulty, under this head, would be our histories of Philosophy, of man's opinions and theories respecting the nature of his Being, and relations to the Universe Visible and Invisible: which History, indeed, were it fitly treated, or fit for right treatment, would be a province of Church History; the logical or dogmatical province thereof; for Philosophy, in its true sense, is or should be the soul, of which Religion, Worship is the body; in the healthy state of things the Philosopher and Priest were one and the same. But Philosophy itself is far enough from wearing this character; neither have its Historians been men, generally speaking, that could in the smallest degree approximate it thereto. . . .

Art also and Literature are intimately blended with Religion; as it were, outworks and abutments, by which that highest pinnacle in our inward world gradually connects itself with the general level, and becomes accessible therefrom. He who should write a proper History of Poetry, would depict for us the successive Revelations which man had obtained of the Spirit of Nature; under what aspects he had caught and

endeavoured to body forth some glimpse of that unspeakable Beauty, which in its highest clearness is Religion, is the inspiration of a Prophet, yet in one or the other degree must inspire every true Singer, were his theme never so humble.[1] We should see by what steps men had ascended to the Temple ; how near they had approached ; by what ill hap they had, for long periods, turned away from it, and grovelled on the plain with no music in the air, or blindly struggled towards other heights. That among all our Eichhorns and Wartons there is no such Historian, must be too clear to every one. Nevertheless let us not despair of far nearer approaches to that excellence. Above all, let us keep the Ideal of it ever in our eye ; for thereby alone have we even a chance to reach it.

Our histories of Laws and Constitutions, wherein many a Montesquieu and Hallam has laboured with acceptance, are of a much simpler nature ; yet deep enough if thoroughly investigated ; and useful, when authentic, even with little depth. Then we have Histories of Medicine, of Mathematics, of Astronomy, Commerce, Chivalry, Monkery ; and Goguets and Beckmanns have come forward with what might be the most bountiful contribution of all, a History of Inventions. Of all which sorts, and many more not here enumerated, not yet devised and put in practice, the merit and the proper scheme may, in our present limits, require no exposition. . . .

[1] *See* Section XVIII., Lyric Poetry.

I want to love Sofia with whole heartedly as she is

Pious

XVII

NATURE AND BOOKS

By Nature, we mean the visible Universe; by books, as we have seen in Section XIII., the stored receptacles of thought. The essay you are to write, would naturally become an inquiry into the relation between the two; hence, an Abstract subject. But, in order to pursue that inquiry, you would find it necessary to possess some knowledge of philosophy, of natural science, and of logic. For our present purpose, it will be better to study the Example, and to give an account of what Richard Jefferies wrote on the subject. It is instructive in many ways, but chiefly because it is the work of a man who, having studied philosophy—which, as we saw in the last section, Carlyle defines as 'man's opinions and theories respecting the nature of his Being, and relations to the Universe Visible and Invisible'—deliberately cast aside all that he had learned from books, and set himself to search for truth by the light of Nature and of his own heart. Jefferies was a profound lover of nature, studying her with a passionate devotion. He was also a poet. Not that he wrote verse—but, he had what is called the poetic temperament. What that was, in his case, may be better learned from his work than from any explanation. And it is because we have,

all of us, something of Jefferies' love for nature, something—however faint—of his poetic quality, something of his desire to search and find out the truth, that his work charms us. (If it charms you not, it is because these qualities of yours have never been developed.) For this man, we feel, has discovered a treasure by a simple way that lies open to all. He went out to look at what lies all about us; and listened to what his own heart had to tell him concerning what he saw. Perhaps the results he gained are of no great value to the realms of knowledge; it is probable that he did little to advance science or philosophy; but he did more—he created works of art. His work gave him a high pleasure while he lived; it remains an unfading delight to all who care to read his books.

So that the Example quoted is to be regarded rather in the light of detached thoughts about its subject, than as a philosophical disquisition. It is in that light you are to read it, and afterwards to give a clear account of the author's impressions—of the effect upon his mind—of his subject. Hence, your essay will be an explanation of your impression of the author's impression: of the effect upon your mind—what you personally think—of the author's presentment of the effect upon *his* mind.

In a problem of the difficulty which the subject in question presents, and which is yet of a personal interest, it will be more profitable for you to deal with it through the medium of a great writer, before attempting its solution yourself.

Read the Example, first, with an eye to discover its Central Idea—which I shall leave you to do for yourself. Then observe, how, in making it clear, the author marshalls his arguments and illustrations; and note any digressions in which he indulges. Then, ask yourself what is the chief Impression left on your own mind;

and choose that impression for the Central Idea of your own essay; to be suggested in the Introduction, made clear and illustrated in the Argument, and summarised in the Conclusion.

EXAMPLE XVII

NATURE AND BOOKS

Richard Jefferies (1848-1887)

FIELD AND HEDGEROW

. . . Would it be possible to build up a fresh system of colour language by means of natural objects? Could we say pine-wood green, larch green, spruce green, wasp yellow, humble-bee amber? And there are fungi that have marked tints, but the Latin names of these agarics[1] are not pleasant. Butterfly blue—but there are several varieties; and this plan is interfered with by two things: first, that almost every single item of nature, however minute, has got a distinctly different colour, so that the dictionary of tints would be immense; and next, so very few would know the object itself that the colour attached to it would have no meaning. The power of language has been gradually enlarging for a great length of time, and I venture to say that the English language at the present time can express more, and is more subtle, flexible, and, at the same time, vigorous, than any of which we possess a record. When people talk to me about studying Sanscrit, or Greek, or Latin, or German, or still more absurd, French, I feel as if I could fell them with a mallet happily.[2] Study the English, and you will find everything there, I reply. With such a language I fully anticipate, in years to come, a great development in the

[1] Agaric, a fungus of the genus *Agaricus*.
[2] Read :—'I could happily (cheerfully) fell them with,' etc

power of expressing thoughts and feelings which are now thoughts and feelings only. How many have said of the sea, 'It makes me feel something I cannot say'! Hence it is clear there exists in the intellect a layer, if I may so call it, of thought yet dumb—chambers within the mind which require the key of new words to unlock.[1] Whenever that is done a fresh impetus is given to human progress. There are a million books, and yet with all their aid I cannot tell you the colour of the May dandelion. There are three greens at this moment in my mind: that of the leaf of the flower-de-luce, that of the yellow iris leaf, and that of the bayonet-like leaf of the common flag. With admission to a million books, how am I to tell you the difference between these tints? So many, many books, and such a very, very little bit of nature in them! Though we have been so many thousand years upon the earth we do not seem to have done any more as yet than walk along beaten footpaths, and sometimes really it would seem as if there were something in the minds of many men quite artificial, quite distinct from the sun and trees and hills—altogether house people, whose gods must be set in four-cornered buildings. There is nothing in books that touches my dandelion.

It grows, ah yes, it grows! How does it grow? Builds itself up somehow of sugar and starch, and turns mud into bright colour and dead earth into food for bees, and some day perhaps for you, and knows when to shut its petals, and how to construct the brown seeds to float with the wind, and how to please the children, and how to puzzle me. Ingenious dandelion! If you find out that its correct botanical name is *Leontodon taraxacum*, or *Leontodon dens-leonis*, that will bring it into botany; and there is a place called Dandelion Castle in Kent, and a bell with the inscription—

> John de Dandelion with his great dog
> Brought over this bell on a mill cog—

which is about as relevant as the mere words *Leontodon*

[1] At present the key belongs to Music.

taraxacum. Botany is the knowledge of plants according to the accepted definition; naturally, therefore, when I began to think I would like to know a little more of flowers than could be learned by seeing them in the fields, I went to botany. Nothing could be more simple. You buy a book which first of all tells you how to recognise them, how to classify them; next instructs you in their uses, medical or economical; next tells you about the folk-lore and curious associations; next enters into a lucid explanation of the physiology of the plant and its relation to other creatures; and finally, and most important, supplies you with the ethical feeling, the ideal aspiration to be identified with each particular flower. One moderately thick volume would probably suffice for such a modest round as this.

Lo! now the labour of Hercules when he set about bringing up Cerberus from below, and all the work done by Apollo in the years when he ground corn, are but a little matter compared with the attempt to master botany. Great minds have been at it these two thousand years, and yet we are still only nibbling at the edge of the leaf, as the ploughboys bite the young hawthorn in spring. The mere classification—all plant-lore was a vast chaos till there came a man of Sweden, the great Linnæus, till[1] the sexes were recognised, and everything was ruled out and set in place again. A wonderful man! I think it would be true to say it was Linnæus who set the world on its present twist of thinking, and levered our mental globe a little more perpendicular to the ecliptic.[2] He actually gathered the dandelion and took it to bits like a scientific child; he touched

[1] Read 'when.'

[2] The author is referring to the angle of about 23° made by the ecliptic—the apparent path of the sun through the heavens—with the equator. I am reminded by a learned friend that there is in Herodotus a reference to the belief that the ecliptic was once perpendicular to the equator. Jefferies probably means to convey the idea that Linnæus set the conceptions of the mind a little nearer to their right relations to the rest of the universe.

nature with his fingers instead of sitting looking out of window—perhaps the first man who had ever done so for seventeen hundred years or so, since superstition blighted the progress of pagan Rome. The work he did! But no one reads Linnæus now; the folios, indeed, might moulder to dust without loss, because his spirit has got into the minds of men, and the text is of little consequence. The best book he wrote to read now is the delightful 'Tour in Lapland,' with its quaint pen-and-ink sketches, so realistically vivid, as if the thing sketched had been banged on the paper and so left its impress. I have read it three times, and I still cherish the old yellow pages; it is the best botanical book, written by the greatest of botanists, specially sent on a botanical expedition, and it contains nothing about botany. It tells you about the canoes, and the hard cheese, and the Laplander's warehouse on top of a pole, like a pigeon-house; and the innocent way in which the maiden helped the traveller in his bath, and how the aged men ran so fast that the devil could not catch them; and, best of all, because it gives a smack in the face to modern pseudo-scientific medical cant about hygiene, showing how the Laplanders break every 'law,' human and 'divine,' ventilation, bath, and diet—all the trash—and therefore enjoy the most excellent health, and live to a great old age. Still I have not succeeded in describing the immense labour there was in learning to distinguish plants on the Linnæan system. Then comes in order of time the natural system, the geographical distribution; then there is the geological relationship, so to say, to Pliocene plants, natural selection and evolution. Of that let us say nothing; let sleeping dogs lie, and evolution is a very weary dog. Most charming, however, will be found the later studies of naturalists on the interdependence of flowers and insects; there is another work the dandelion has got to do—endless, endless botany! Where did the plants come from at first? Did they come creeping up out of the sea at the edge of the estuaries, and gradually run their roots into the ground, and so make green

the earth? Did Man come out of the sea, as the Greeks thought? There are so many ideas in plants. Flora,[1] with a full lap, scattering knowledge and flowers together; everything good and sweet seems to come out of flowers, up to the very highest thoughts of the soul, and we carry them daily to the very threshold of the other world. Next you may try the microscope and its literature, and find the crystals in the rhubarb. . . .

And still there are the periodicals, a century of magazines and journals and reviews and notices that have been coming out these hundred years and dropping to the ground like dead leaves unnoticed. And then there are the art works—books about shape and colour and ornament, and a naturalist lately has been trying to see how the leaves of one tree look fitted on the boughs of another. Boundless is the wealth of Flora's lap; the ingenuity of man has been weaving wreaths out of it for ages, and still the bottom of the sack is not yet. Nor have we got much news of the dandelion. For I sit on the thrown timber under the trees and meditate, and I want something more: I want the soul of the flowers.

The bee and the butterfly take their pollen and their honey, and the strange moths so curiously coloured, like the curious colouring of the owls, come to them by night, and they turn towards the sun and live their little day, and their petals fall, and where is the soul when the body decays? I want the inner meaning and the understanding of the wild flowers in the meadow. Why are they? What end? What purpose? The plant knows, and sees, and feels; where is its mind when the petal falls? Absorbed in the universal dynamic[2] force, or what? They make no shadow of pretence, these beautiful flowers, of being beautiful for my sake, of bearing honey for me; in short, there does not seem to be any kind of relationship between us, and yet—as I said just now—language does not express the dumb

[1] In Roman mythology, the Goddess of Flowers.

[2] Pertaining to motion as the result of force: opposed to *static*.

feelings of the mind any more than the flower can speak. I want to know the soul of the flowers, but the word soul does not in the smallest degree convey the meaning of my wish. It is quite inadequate; I must hope that you will grasp the drift of my meaning. All these life-laboured monographs, these classifications, works of Linnæus, and our own classic Darwin, microscope, physiology, and the flower has not given us its message yet. There are a million books; there are no books: all the books have to be written. What a field! A whole million of books have got to be written. In this sense there are hardly a dozen of them done, and these mere primers. The thoughts of man are like the foraminifera, those minute shells which build up the solid chalk hills and lay the level plain of endless sand; so minute that, save with a powerful lens, you would never imagine the dust on your fingers to be more than dust. The thoughts of man are like these: each to him seems great in his day, but the ages roll, and they shrink till they become triturated dust, and you might, as it were, put a thousand on your thumb-nail. They are not shapeless dust for all that; they are organic,[1] and they build and weld and grow together, till in the passage of time they will make a new earth and a new life. So I think I may say there are no books; the books are yet to be written. . . .

[1] Having the capacity of growth, having structure, consisting of *organs*, which have the capacity of developing in accordance with the laws of life.

XVIII

THE AIM OF POETRY

BEFORE discussing the Aim of Poetry, we must endeavour to arrive at some sort of definition of Poetry. What is Poetry?[1] It is far easier to recognise than to define that which we call Poetry. It is, however, first of all, an art; and all art, according to Aristotle, is imitation; as we saw in Section XI. 'Art imitates Nature . . . discovers the "form" towards which an object tends, the result which nature strives to attain,

[1] The word Poetry is used throughout, not in the sense of *verse*, which simply means a certain metrical arrangement of words, but, in its sense of the presentation of a particular kind of idea, or group of ideas, in words; *whether such words are metrically arranged or not.* I am obliged to use the word Poetry, because there is no other word to use. Verse is usually selected as the vehicle of poetry, in preference to prose, because finer and more delicate *form* may be obtained by means of words metrically arranged. Hence arose the common, somewhat misleading, phrases, 'poetic diction'—merely meaning the diction proper to verse, that is, metrical composition; and 'prose diction'—merely meaning the diction proper to non-metrical composition. But, there is much verse that does not convey poetry; and much prose that does. So that we are obliged, in a critical analysis of poetry, to use the word in its single signification of the presentation of a particular kind of idea, or group of ideas, instead of in its double signification (as commonly used) which connotes verse as well.

but rarely or never can attain. . . . It passes beyond the bare reality given by nature, and expresses a purified form of reality disengaged from accident, and freed from conditions which thwart its development . . . unfolding itself according to the law of its own being, apart from alien influences and the disturbances of chance.'[1] Imitation, then, is a bringing towards perfection. Music, painting, sculpture and poetry are but different forms of this bringing towards perfection. Pursuing the definition, we find we have to inquire, What is perfection? How do we recognise perfection, or a degree of perfection? By the feeling which we experience when we are brought into contact with a work of art. What is that feeling—or, more precisely—that emotion? Pleasure. But, pleasure is of many kinds. What kind of pleasure do we derive from a work of art? The kind of pleasure that arises from the sense of beauty. To define in what that pleasure consists, of what elements it is composed, would carry us beyond the limits of the subject. It is enough for our present purpose to note that the pleasure which is afforded by the kind of writing called Poetry arises from our sense (in whatever that may consist) of the beautiful. What is implied in this conclusion? That if, in reading, we experience any other kind of emotion than that which is aroused by beauty, what we are reading cannot be poetry; always assuming that we have sufficient taste and intelligence to appreciate—that is, to rate at its true value—the work in question. And what follows? That poetry is any kind of writing which gives us the kind of pleasure arising from a sense of the beautiful. Strictly speaking, it matters not whether the words are arranged in prose or in

[1] *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art.* Butcher.

verse. We need not now enter into the question of the distinction between the two; it is sufficient to take the general definition. The Muses, says an old Greek writer, quoted by Mr. Arnold in the Example, were born that they might be a forgetfulness of evils, and a truce from cares; which is merely saying negatively that they were born to minister pleasure. Or, as Keats wrote:—

> 'And they shall be accounted poet-kings,
> Who simply tell the most heart-easing things.'

What, then, is the aim of Poetry? To minister that kind of pleasure which arises from a sense of the beautiful.

We have now carried our definition of the words of the title far enough to enable us to see what problem we are to endeavour to solve in the essay we have to write. What is that problem? It may be stated thus: What means are those by which Poetry best fulfils its aim? We see at once that the subject is Abstract; and that we must consequently treat it by analysis. The aim of Poetry being to minister pleasure, that aim is best fulfilled when the work in question gives the highest degree of pleasure. So that if we find what those works are which give the highest degree of pleasure, we shall be able to perceive by what means the pleasure arising from them is produced.

Up to this point, you may consider yourself to have been conducting those preliminary investigations, without which the information you may gather from others is comparatively useless. You now perceive clearly what points they are upon which you require enlightenment. You want to know what are the works that have the power of giving the highest degree of pleasure; and what it is in them that gives this power.

In dealing with a question so difficult and complex, your own experience will be inadequate and possibly misleading. Before looking elsewhere, read that part of Mr. Matthew Arnold's essay on the subject, which is quoted in the following Example. Mr. Arnold was a scholar, a poet and a critic: perhaps, in his own way, the greatest critic of English letters since Dr. Johnson. His argument is always ingenious and clear; his style scholarly, admirably lucid, if a little colourless and a little cold. You cannot do better than read, not only this fragment from the Preface to his volume of *Poems*, published in 1854, but, the whole of Mr. Arnold's critical Essays.

EXAMPLE XVIII

THE AIM OF POETRY

MATTHEW ARNOLD (1822-1888)

PREFACE TO POEMS. 1854

. . . We all naturally take pleasure, says Aristotle, in any imitation or representation whatever: this is the basis of our love of Poetry: and we take pleasure in them, he adds, because all knowledge is naturally agreeable to us; not to the philosopher only, but to mankind at large. Every representation therefore which is consistently drawn may be supposed to be interesting, inasmuch as it gratifies this natural interest in knowledge of all kinds. What is *not* interesting, is that which does not add to our knowledge of any kind; that which is vaguely conceived and loosely drawn; a representation which is general, indeterminate, and faint, instead of being particular, precise, and firm.

Any accurate representation may therefore be expected to be interesting; but, if the representation be a poetical

one, more than this is demanded. It is demanded, not only that it shall interest, but also that it shall inspirit and rejoice the reader: that it shall convey a charm, and infuse delight. For the Muses, as Hesiod says, were born that they might be 'a forgetfulness of evils, and a truce from cares': and it is not enough that the Poet should add to the knowledge of men, it is required of him also that he should add to their happiness. 'All Art,' says Schiller, 'is dedicated to Joy, and there is no higher and no more serious problem, than how to make men happy. The right Art is that alone, which creates the highest enjoyment.'

A poetical work, therefore, is not yet justified when it has been shown to be an accurate, and therefore interesting, representation; it has to be shown also that it is a representation from which men can derive enjoyment. In presence of the most tragic circumstances, represented in a work of Art, the feeling of enjoyment, as is well known, may still subsist: the representation of the most utter calamity, of the liveliest anguish, is not sufficient to destroy it: the more tragic the situation, the deeper becomes the enjoyment; and the situation is more tragic in proportion as it becomes more terrible.

What then are the situations, from the representation of which, though accurate, no poetical enjoyment can be derived? They are those in which the suffering finds no vent in action; in which a continuous state of mental distress is prolonged, unrelieved by incident, hope, or resistance; in which there is everything to be endured, nothing to be done. In such situations there is inevitably something morbid, in the description of them something monotonous.[1] When they occur in actual life, they are painful, not tragic; the representation of them in poetry is painful also. . . .

'The Poet,' it is said, and by an intelligent critic, 'the Poet who would really fix the public attention must leave the exhausted past, and draw his subjects from matters

[1] As in much modern French fiction, and in some English.

of present import and, *therefore*, both of interest and novelty.'

Now this view I believe to be completely false. It is worth examining, inasmuch as it is a fair sample of a class of critical dicta everywhere current at the present day, having a philosophical form and air, but no real basis in fact; and which are calculated to vitiate the judgment of readers of poetry, while they exert, so far as they are adopted, a misleading influence on the practice of those who write it.

What are the eternal objects of Poetry, among all nations and at all times? They are actions; human actions; possessing an inherent interest in themselves, and which are to be communicated in an interesting manner by the art of the Poet. Vainly will the latter imagine that he has everything in his own power; that he can make an intrinsically inferior action equally delightful with a more excellent one by his treatment of it: he may indeed compel us to admire his skill, but his work will possess, within itself, an incurable defect.

The Poet, then, has in the first place to select an excellent action; and what actions are the most excellent?[1] Those, certainly, which most powerfully appeal to the great primary human affections: to those elementary feelings which subsist permanently in the race, and which are independent of time. These feelings are permanent and the same; that which interests them is permanent and the same also. The modernness or antiquity of an action, therefore, has nothing to do with its fitness for poetical representation; this depends upon its inherent qualities. To the elementary part of our nature, to our passions, that which is great and passionate is eternally interesting; and interesting solely in proportion to its greatness and to its passion. A great human action of a thousand years ago is more interesting to it than a smaller human action of to-day, even though upon the representation of this last the most consummate skill

[1] Interrogation, here, is more suitable than direct statement, as arousing the reader's attention.

may have been expended, and though it has the advantage of appealing by its modern language, familiar manners, and contemporary allusions, to all our transient feelings and interests. These, however, have no right to demand of a poetical work that it shall satisfy them ; their claims are to be directed elsewhere. Poetical works belong to the domain of our permanent passions : let them interest these, and the voice of all subordinate claims upon them is at once silenced.

Achilles, Prometheus, Clytemnestra, Dido—what modern poem presents personages as interesting, even to us moderns, as these personages of an 'exhausted past'? We have the domestic epic dealing with the details of modern life which pass daily under our eyes ; we have poems representing modern personages in contact with the problems of modern life, moral, intellectual, and social ; these works have been produced by poets the most distinguished of their nation and time ; yet I fearlessly assert that Hermann and Dorothea, Childe Harold, Jocelyn, The Excursion, leave the reader cold in comparison with the effect produced upon him by the latter books of the Iliad, by the Orestea, or by the episode of Dido. And why is this? Simply because in the three latter cases the action is greater, the personages nobler, the situations more intense : and this is the true basis of the interest in a poetical work, and this alone.

It may be urged, however, that past actions may be interesting in themselves, but that they are not to be adopted by the modern Poet, because it is impossible for him to have them clearly present to his own mind, and he cannot therefore feel them deeply, nor represent them forcibly. But this is not necessarily the case. The externals of a past action, indeed, he cannot know with the precision of a contemporary ; but his business is with its essentials. The outward man of Œdipus or of Macbeth, the houses in which they lived, the ceremonies of their courts, he cannot accurately figure to himself ; but neither do they essentially concern him. His business is with their inward man ; with their feelings and behaviour in certain tragic situations, which engage their

passions as men ; these have in them nothing local and casual ; they are as accessible to the modern Poet as to a contemporary.

The date of an action, then, signifies nothing ; the action itself, its selection and construction, this is what is all-important. This the Greeks understood far more clearly than we do. The radical difference between their poetical theory and ours consists, as it appears to me, in this : [1] that, with them, the poetical character of the action in itself, and the conduct of it, was the first consideration ; with us, attention is fixed mainly on the value of the separate thoughts and images which occur in the treatment of an action. They regarded the whole ; we regard the parts. With them, the action predominated over the expression of it ; with us, the expression predominates over the action. Not that they failed in expression, or were inattentive to it ; on the contrary, they are the highest models of expression, the unapproached masters of the *grand style* : but their expression is so excellent because it is so admirably kept in its right degree of prominence ; because it is so simple and so well subordinated ; because it draws its force directly from the pregnancy of the matter which it conveys.[1] For what reason was the Greek tragic poet confined to so limited a range of subjects ? Because there are so few actions which unite in themselves, in the highest degree, the conditions of excellence : and it was not thought that on any but an excellent subject could an excellent Poem be constructed. A few actions, therefore, eminently adapted for tragedy, maintained almost exclusive possession of the Greek tragic stage ; their significance appeared inexhaustible; they were as permanent problems, perpetually offered to the genius of every fresh poet. This too is the reason of what appears to us moderns a certain baldness of expression in Greek tragedy ; of the triviality with which we often reproach the remarks of the chorus, where it takes part in the dialogue : that the action itself, the situation of Orestes, or

[1] Example of the use of colon, when the following clauses of the sentence are all tributary to the first clause.

Merope, or Alcmæon, was to stand the central point of interest, unforgotten, absorbing, principal; that no accessories were for a moment to distract the spectator's attention from this; that the tone of the parts was to be perpetually kept down, in order not to impair the grandiose effect of the whole. The terrible old mythic story on which the drama was founded stood, before he entered the theatre, traced in its bare outlines upon the spectator's mind; it stood in his memory, as a group of statuary, faintly seen, at the end of a long and dark vista: then came the Poet, embodying outlines, developing situations, not a word wasted, not a sentiment capriciously thrown in: stroke upon stroke, the drama proceeded: the light deepened upon the group; more and more it revealed itself to the riveted gaze of the spectator: until at last, when the final words were spoken, it stood before him in broad sunlight, a model of immortal beauty.

This was what a Greek critic demanded; this was what a Greek poet endeavoured to effect.

The position at once occupied by the author, in his Introduction, is unassailable. We naturally take pleasure he says, quoting Aristotle, in any representation, because all knowledge is naturally agreeable to us. But, the poet carries that pleasure to its highest degree. Mr. Arnold goes on to define the kind of imitation which is *not* agreeable to us. It is an attempt at representation which has failed. When the author says that 'a poetical work, therefore, is not yet justified when it has been shewn to be an accurate, and therefore interesting, representation; it has to be shewn also that it is a representation from which men can derive enjoyment,' he means that unless a poetical work affords the kind of enjoyment which arises from a sense of beauty (of which we spoke anon), it is not poetry; and that if it does afford such enjoyment—by what means soever, by tragedy, comedy, or lyric—it *is* poetry. He proceeds to define the kind

of imitation which, while succeeding in accuracy of representation, is not and cannot be poetry.

The Argument then goes on to explain very clearly and (as I believe) with truth, what are the works that have the power of giving the highest degree of pleasure, and in what that power consists. The works are those which deal with the human actions 'which most powerfully appeal to the great primary human affections'—the passions of love, of hate, the lust of warfare: the works, in fact, of Homer, of the Greek Tragedians, and of Shakespeare. The power of these works consists, first of all, in the excellence of those Actions which are their subject; in the selection and presentment of great personages, inspired with high passions, acting in perilous situations; and secondly, in the 'value of the separate thoughts and images which occur in the treatment of an action.'

Or, as Mr. R. L. Stevenson puts the matter:—'In the highest achievements of the art of words, the dramatic and the pictorial, the moral and romantic interest, rise and fall together by a common and organic law. Situation is animated with passion, passion clothed upon with situation. Neither exists for itself, but each inheres indissolubly with the other. This is high art; and not only the highest art possible in words, but the highest art of all, since it combines the greatest mass and diversity of the elements of truth and pleasure.'[1] The combination of the greatest mass and diversity of the elements of truth and pleasure—that is the aim of great poetry; and those elements are dramatic, pictorial, moral and romantic. In other words, the elements are, as Mr. Arnold says, great actions, together with the separate thoughts and images that occur in their treatment. For, drama is the conflict of action with

[1] *A Gossip on Romance.* R. L. Stevenson.

action, or of action with circumstance ; the moral interest has to do with the motives inspiring such action ; the pictorial (picture-making) and romantic interest arises from the charm of circumstance—of those things which surround the actors, and amid which they move.

Illustrate the argument from your knowledge of Homer, of Sophocles, Æschylus, Euripides, Shakespeare. Stevenson, who, in the essay from which I have quoted above, was pursuing a somewhat different line of argument from our own, and who consequently included in his category a wider range of works, illustrates his meaning as follows :—'Crusoe recoiling from the footprint, Achilles shouting over against the Trojans, Ulysses bending the great bow, Christian running with his fingers in his ears, these are each culminating moments in the legend, and each has been printed on the mind's eye for ever.' In the same concise and forcible manner, should you introduce your illustrations.

Having arrived at the conclusion that Poetry best fulfils its aim in the Epic, such as the Iliad and the Odyssey, and in Tragedy, such as the works of the Greek Tragedians and, among moderns, Shakespeare ; because in them are found 'the greatest mass and diversity of the elements of truth and pleasure' ; the questions naturally arise :—Are not those elements to be found in Poetry, separate and uncombined ? And if so, does not Poetry fulfil its aim in them also ? The reply is of course in the affirmative. What is the first and chief element in Poetry which, standing alone, does yet afford the highest pleasure ? The Lyric. What is the Lyric ? To arrive at a definition, we must refer to Mr. Henley's Preface to his collection of English Lyrics.[1] 'It is easy,'

[1] *English Lyrics :* Chaucer to Poe. 1340-1849. Selected and arranged by William Ernest Henley. (Methuen.)

says Mr. Henley, 'to tell a lyric when you see one. It is not so easy to say what a lyric is. "Lyrical," says Mr. Palgrave in his Preface to the best-read anthology in the language, "has been"—presumably, therefore, should be—"held to imply that each Poem shall turn on some single thought, feeling, or situation." I would rather say that unless "thought" *and* "feeling," *and* "situation" all are single, and are all present, and so present that in the final result "feeling" shall oblige us to forget the others, or at least to consider them as chiefly essential to its triumphing expression, that result is not a lyric . . . As I think, then, the specific attribute, the saving and essential virtue, of verse that is lyrical to ear and heart as distinguished from verse that is lyrical to the eye alone, is temperamental in origin and emotional in effect. If a poet have the Lyrical Temperament, his effect will be lyrical whenever, and in whatever form, he is moved to pass on an emotion, or a sequence of emotions, from himself to his hearers, whether present or to be, in the terms of art.'

For instance, the songs 'Take, O, take those lips away,' in *Measure for Measure*; 'On a day, alack the day,' and 'When daisies pied,' in *Love's Labour's Lost*; and 'Under the Greenwood Tree,' in *As You Like It*—to name but these—are all lyrics; they are all subsidiary parts of the plays in which they occur; and yet, taken singly, they lose none of their charm. And, of course, there are unnumbered lyrics which exist for themselves alone. Mr. Henley reckons, for instance, among lyrical poets—to take a random selection—Chaucer, Marvell, Ben Jonson, Herrick, Spenser, Shelley; and—a distinction which will help to make clear the definition—among those writers of verse who had not the 'Lyrical Temperament,' Addison, Prior, Shenstone, Pope, Thomson, Gay, and Southey.

Return for a moment to Mr. Stevenson's definition of great literature, which, he says, embodies 'character, thought, or emotion in some act or attitude that shall be remarkably striking to the mind's eye'; and consider his remark:—'compared with this, all other purposes in literature, *except the purely lyrical* or the purely philosophic'—with which last, as we are dealing with that kind of literature which appeals wholly to the sense of pleasure, and not to the desire of knowledge, we have not now to do—'are bastard in nature, facile of execution, and feeble in result'; and you will find that you have arrived at a sufficient understanding of the problem presented to you, to enable you to explain and to illustrate its main factors.

You are now to make up your notes; which will consist of a summary of the conclusions at which you have arrived, and a concise statement of Mr. Arnold's views; with such quotations and illustrations as you consider requisite. The more quotation and illustration you can introduce into this particular essay, the clearer will your argument become. Your Central Idea is, That the Aim of Poetry is to minister the highest possible pleasure by the delineation of excellent Action.

XIX

ALL IS VANITY

VANITY is derived from the Latin *vanitas*, signifying emptiness, uselessness, futility. Accordingly, the words of the title signify that all things are empty, useless, futile, disappointing, worthless, unsatisfying, unprofitable. In other words, man fails to find enjoyment in his life. What does this proposition mean? It means that human life is wholly unprofitable. But, this is obviously an untenable proposition, open to infinite objection. Experience tells us that man finds a deal of pleasure and satisfaction in his life. Is there, then, no truth in the statement that all is vanity? Could the statement of the exact opposite—that man finds entire happiness in his life—be accepted? Again, an obviously untenable proposition. What follows? That both propositions are partly true, and partly false. How then, are we to consider the statement that all is vanity? As the statement of one point of view only. Why is it stated so roundly, as though it were all the truth instead of part of the truth? Because it is impossible to present more than one point of view of any given subject at one time. The statement, then, of the opposite point of view would belong to another essay.

Hence, so far as our present purpose is concerned,

we have only to consider and to make clear that part of the whole truth which is contained in the words of the title: we are to shew in what manner life is empty, useless, futile, disappointing, worthless, unsatisfying, unprofitable, vain. This, then, is our Subject. Is it Concrete or Abstract? It must be treated as a combination of the two; for, we must find our material in the facts of experience, which are to be considered as included in the concrete; and yet those very facts are abstract things—feelings, ideas, theories.

You are now to reflect upon your own experience of life, and so much of the experience of others as you have learned by observation or by reading. You will at the outset discover the need of classifying the experiences which life has to offer. There is Work: whose primary motive is self-preservation; a motive which takes many shapes when the need for bread is satisfied; as the desire of achievement of fame, or of power, or of riches. There is Pleasure, in its various forms: the gratification of the senses, or of the intellect; there are the human relationships of love, of friendship, of enmity. In all these, disappointment lurks; and this is what you are to shew. You will do so by general statement—as in the Example—illustrated by particular instances, and by quotation. Having completed your notes, you will perceive that your Central Idea is found for you. It is expressed in the title—All is Vanity.

Now consider the Example. Taken from the English Bible, it is an example of perfect English prose: simple, eloquent, musical. Read it, first, with the sole intent to comprehend its meaning; read it again, with an ear for its rhythm; that indefinable, musical quality of fine prose which cannot be reduced to rule; which must be acquired by ear alone.

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EXAMPLE XIX

ALL IS VANITY

THE ENGLISH BIBLE

ECC. I. 2-11

Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity.

What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun? One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth for ever. The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose. The wind goeth towards the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits. All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again.

All things are full of labour; man cannot utter it: the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing. The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done, is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun. Is there any thing whereof it may be said, See, this is new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us.

There is no remembrance of former things; neither shall there be any remembrance of things that are to come with those that shall come after.

The Introduction is simplicity itself; stating the Central Idea in so many words. The Argument begins to illustrate the theme, by suggesting the futility of that labour to which man devotes his life, in the simplest form, the form of a question. The author pauses not

for an answer; a sufficient answer has, indeed, never been discovered. The argument goes on to include, by way of illustration, all the visible universe wherein man pursues his unprofitable calling: the sun and the wind, the rivers and the sea, like man himself, perform their allotted task, to no apparent end. And 'all things are full of labour'; bound on the same Wheel of Life; nor, if man would pursue pleasure, may he find contentment. The 'eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.' And as to the result of the whole: it is nothing; it has happened before; it will happen again. To Conclude: all is forgotten.

You see how complete an effect is gained by keeping strictly to the one point of view; the rule is stated as though it had no exceptions. It is the only method; there is no choice in the matter; if you are to state a theory, you must state it absolutely, and without regard to objections. Their treatment is for another occasion.

With regard to quotation, you remember that John Bunyan (whose one book was the Bible) called his picture of the world, Vanity Fair; and that he quotes from Ecclesiastes. 'Then I saw in my dream, that, when they were got out of the wilderness, they presently saw a town before them, and the name of that town is Vanity; and at the town there is a fair kept, called Vanity Fair. It is kept all the year long. It beareth the name of Vanity Fair, because the town where it is kept is lighter than vanity (Eccl. ii. 11-17; Psa. lxii. 9), and also because all that is there sold, or that cometh thither, is vanity; as is the saying of the Wise, "All that cometh is vanity." (Eccl. xi. 8; see also i. 2-14; ii. 11-17; Isa. xl. 17).'

As Bunyan drew from Ecclesiastes, so may you draw from *The Pilgrim's Progress*. There is also Jeremy Taylor, the great preacher and writer; turn to his *Holy*

Dying (you may buy it for a few pence) :—' All the rich and all the covetous men in the world will perceive, and all the world will perceive for them, that it is but an ill recompense for all their cares, that by this time, all that shall be left will be this, that the neighbours shall say " He died a rich man " ; . . . Those into whose possession their heirs or kindred are entered, are forgotten, and lie unregarded as their ashes, and without concernment or relation, as the turf upon the face of their grave . . . I that wore a mitre am now a little heap of dust . . .' and so on. Refer also to Virgil, *Georgics*, I., 200-203. These are but suggestions ; it matters not from whom you quote, so the quotation be apt.

XX

LIFE'S WASTE

A REFERENCE to the Example will show you what the words of the title mean, and that the Subject is something akin to the last. The greater part of life is wasted in vain employments; vain, because they bring no enduring satisfaction: that is the proposition. Here again, so far as the statement goes, no exception is admitted. The subject, dealing with matters of practical experience, is Concrete. Beyond the facts of experience we need not go; except, perhaps, to inquire why it is that men 'so mis-spend the better part of life.' You have, then, to marshal the facts of experience into their various divisions; each division illustrating one particular method of spending time and effort in vain; that is, without gaining a proportionate value of either pleasure or profit. The divisions in the Example—which are fairly exhaustive—may be followed for the sake of convenience; or, you may make your own. With regard to the reasons of the common infatuation which you describe, you may discover them by means of a little reflection; or, if the problem baffles you, it may be left on one side. You have only to illustrate in detail and to make plain the Central Idea: that the greater part of life is wasted in vain employments.

You will see that the Example cited would serve for the Introduction to a longer essay, had the author desired to treat the subject completely. But, he was content here, as in most of the condensed essays of his shrewd and scholarly wisdom — his *Discoveries*—contained in the little book from which the Example is taken, to record his experience in two or three eloquent phrases.

EXAMPLE XX

JACTURA VITÆ

BEN JONSON (1574-1637)

TIMBER: OR DISCOVERIES. XII

What a deal of cold business doth a man mis-spend the better part of life in! in scattering compliments, tendering visits, gathering and venting news, following feasts and plays, making a little winter-love in a dark corner.

Note that every phrase exactly hits the author's vigorous thought, and aptly illustrates his Central Idea—the futility of much of ordinary life, whose casual occupations do not even excite the pleasure for whose sake they are followed in the stead of pursuits more lively. 'A deal of cold business . . . mis-spend the better part of life . . . scattering compliments'—carrying the sense of flung away and carelessly wasted—'tendering visits'—carrying the sense of indifference both on the part of visitor and visited—'gathering and venting news'—as of a mechanical process—'following feasts and plays'—as of one who goes with a crowd, unreasoning—and even the business of love is undertaken coldly, and as if it were a thing of which to be ashamed.

Note, also, that every phrase might stand as the introductory sentence of a paragraph in a long essay, in which the theme is illustrated in detail.

Ben Jonson had what is called Style in a supreme degree; that is, he had vigorous notions clearly defined in his own mind, with the power of expressing them in those words which exactly conveyed them. That is the way to write.

XXI

ON WIT AND HUMOUR

IN this exercise, as in Section XVI., you are required to learn what a great writer has to teach you on the subject, rather than to attempt its investigation unaided. The elements of Wit and Humour, as they are part of man's nature, make up a great part of life and of literature; and in order to appreciate—that is, to rate at a true value—both life and literature, you must have a clear understanding of wit and of humour; and, as the author of the Example points out, in order to obtain that understanding, you must first comprehend the nature of the opposite element: the element of the serious. Between the two poles of the serious and the comic, all life revolves; so that it may be said that you have, in this little essay, a view of life as a whole. The extreme of the serious is the tragic; but, as our essay is dealing with wit and humour, the tragic is disposed of with a brief definition. The nature of tragedy remains to be considered in a future essay.

Before beginning to read the Example, ask yourself, What is wit, and what is humour? Although it is likely that you have a vague conviction that you understand what these qualities are, you will probably find considerable difficulty in arriving at a definition. So

soon as you have realised that difficulty, begin to study the Example. It will answer all the questions which your preliminary reflection has raised in your mind. Read it, first, with your attention fixed upon the general meaning of the whole; then, master the steps of the argument in detail, and note their arrangement; and, finally, learn by heart those sentences and phrases which, conveying the gist of the matter, serve to remind you of the details of the argument and its illustrations.

Then, after making out your notes in the manner suggested at the end of the Example, write your own account of Hazlitt's analysis of the nature of Wit and Humour.

EXAMPLE XXI

ON WIT AND HUMOUR

William Hazlitt (1778-1830)

ENGLISH COMIC WRITERS. LECTURE I

Man is the only animal that laughs and weeps; for he is the only animal that is struck with the difference between what things are, and what they ought to be. We weep at what thwarts or exceeds our desires in serious matters: we laugh at what only disappoints our expectations in trifles. We shed tears from sympathy with real and necessary distress; as we burst into laughter from want of sympathy with that which is unreasonable and unnecessary, the absurdity of which provokes our spleen or mirth, rather than any serious reflections on it.

To explain the nature of laughter and tears, is to account for the condition of human life; for it is in a manner compounded of these two! It is a tragedy or a comedy—sad or merry, as it happens. The crimes and misfortunes that are inseparable from it, shock and wound the mind

when they once seize upon it, and when the pressure can no longer be borne, seek relief in tears: the follies and absurdities that men commit, or the odd accidents that befall them, afford us amusement from the very rejection of these false claims upon our sympathy and end in laughter. If everything that went wrong, if every vanity or weakness in another gave us a sensible pang, it would be hard indeed: but as long as the disagreeableness of the consequences of a sudden disaster is kept out of sight by the immediate oddity of the circumstances, and the absurdity or unaccountableness of a foolish action is the most striking thing in it, the ludicrous prevails over the pathetic, and we receive pleasure instead of pain from the farce of life which is played before us, and which discomposes our gravity as often as it fails to move our anger or our pity! . . .

To understand or define the ludicrous, we must first know what the serious is. Now the serious is the habitual stress which the mind lays upon the expectation of a given order of events, following one another with a certain regularity and weight of interest attached to them. When this stress is increased beyond its usual pitch of intensity, so as to overstrain the feelings by the violent opposition of good to bad, or of objects to our desires, it becomes the pathetic or tragical. The ludicrous, or comic, is the unexpected loosening or relaxing this stress below its usual pitch of intensity, by such an abrupt transposition of the order of our ideas, as taking the mind unawares, throws it off its guard, startles it into a lively sense of pleasure, and leaves no time nor inclination for painful reflections.

The essence of the laughable then is the incongruous, the disconnecting one idea from another, or the jostling of one feeling against another. The first and most obvious cause of laughter is to be found in the simple succession of events, as in the sudden shifting of a disguise, or some unlooked-for accident, without any absurdity of character or situation. The accidental contradiction between our expectations and the event can hardly be said, however, to

amount to the ludicrous: it is merely laughable. The ludicrous is where there is the same contradiction between the object and our expectations, heightened by some deformity or inconvenience, that is, by its being contrary to what is customary or desirable; as the ridiculous, which is the highest degree of the laughable, is that which is contrary not only to custom but to sense and reason, or is a voluntary departure from what we have a right to expect from those who are conscious of absurdity and propriety in words, looks, and actions.

Of these different kinds or degrees of the laughable, the first is the most shallow and short-lived; for the instant the immediate surprise of a thing's merely happening one way or another is over, there is nothing to throw us back upon our former expectation, and renew our wonder at the event a second time. The second sort, that is, the ludicrous arising out of the improbable or distressing, is more deep and lasting, either because the painful catastrophe excites a greater curiosity, or because the old impression, from its habitual hold on the imagination, still recurs mechanically, so that it is longer before we can seriously make up our minds to the unaccountable deviation from it. The third sort, or the ridiculous arising out of absurdity as well as improbability, that is, where the defect or weakness is of a man's own seeking, is the most refined of all, but not always so pleasant as the last, because the same contempt and disapprobation which sharpens and subtilises our sense of the impropriety, adds a severity to it inconsistent with perfect ease and enjoyment. This last species is properly the province of satire. The principle of contrast is, however, the same in all the stages, in the simply laughable, the ludicrous, the ridiculous; and the effect is only the more complete, the more durably and pointedly this principle operates.

To give some examples in these different kinds. We laugh, when children, at the sudden removing of a pasteboard mask; we laugh when grown up more gravely [1] at the tear-

[1] Read :—'when we are grown up, we laugh more gravely,' etc.

ing off the mask of deceit. We laugh at absurdity. . . . Three chimney-sweepers meeting three Chinese in Lincoln's-inn Fields, they laughed at one another till they were ready to drop down. . . .

One rich source of the ludicrous is distress with which we cannot sympathise from its absurdity or insignificance. . . .

'There is something in the misfortunes of our best friends that pleases us.'[1] . . .

We laugh at that in others which is a serious matter to ourselves; because our self-love is stronger than our sympathy, sooner takes the alarm, and instantly turns our heedless mirth into gravity, which only enhances the jest to others. Some one is generally sure to be the sufferer by a joke. What is sport to one, is death to another. It is only very sensible or very honest people, who laugh as freely at their own absurdities as at those of their neighbours. In general the contrary rule holds, and we only laugh at those misfortunes in which we are spectators, not sharers. The injury, the disappointment, shame, and vexation that we feel, put a stop to our mirth; while the disasters that come home to us, and excite our repugnance and dismay, are an amusing spectacle to others. . . .

You cannot force people to laugh: you cannot give a reason why they should laugh: they must laugh of themselves, or not at all. As we laugh from a spontaneous impulse, we laugh the more at any restraint upon this impulse. We laugh at a thing merely because we ought not. If we think we must not laugh, this perverse impediment makes our temptation to laugh the greater; for by endeavouring to keep the obnoxious image out of sight, it comes upon us more irresistibly and repeatedly; and the inclination to indulge our mirth, the longer it is held back, collects its force, and breaks out the more violently in peals of laughter. . . .

Again, unconsciousness in the person himself of what he is about, or of what others think of him, is also a great

[1] Montesquieu.

heightener of the sense of absurdity. It makes it come the fuller home upon us from his insensibility to it. His simplicity sets off the satire, and gives it a finer edge. It is a more extreme case still where the person is aware of being the object of ridicule, and yet seems perfectly reconciled to it as a matter of course. So wit is often the more forcible and pointed for being dry and serious, for it then seems as if the speaker himself had no intention in it, and we were the first to find it out. Irony, as a species of wit, owes its force to the same principle. In such cases it is the contrast between the appearance and the reality, the suspense of belief and the seeming incongruity, that gives point to the ridicule, and makes it enter the deeper when the first impression is overcome. Excessive impudence, as in the 'Liar'; or excessive modesty, as in the hero of 'She Stoops to Conquer'; or a mixture of the two, as in the 'Busy Body,' are equally amusing. Lying is a species of wit and humour. To lay anything to a person's charge from which he is perfectly free, shows spirit and invention; and the more incredible the effrontery, the greater is the joke. . . .

Humour is the describing the ludicrous as it is in itself; wit is the exposing it, by comparing or contrasting it with something else. Humour is, as it were, the growth of nature and accident; wit is the product of art and fancy. Humour, as it is shown in books, is an imitation of the natural or acquired absurdities of mankind, or of the ludicrous in accident, situation, and character: wit is the illustrating and heightening the sense of that absurdity by some sudden and unexpected likeness or opposition of one thing to another, which sets off the quality we laugh at or despise in a still more contemptible or striking point of view. Wit, as distinguished from poetry, is the imagination or fancy inverted, and so applied to given objects, as to make the little look less, the mean more light and worthless; or to divert our admiration or wean our affections from that which is lofty and impressive, instead of producing a more intense admiration and exalted passion, as poetry does. Wit may

sometimes, indeed, be shown in compliments as well as satire ; as in the common epigram—

> 'Accept a miracle, instead of wit :
> See two dull lines with Stanhope's pencil writ.'

But then the mode of paying it is playful and ironical, and contradicts itself in the very act of making its own performance an humble foil to another's. Wit hovers round the borders of the light and trifling, whether in matters of pleasure or pain ; for as soon as it describes the serious seriously, it ceases to be wit, and passes into a different form. Wit is, in fact, the eloquence of indifference, or an ingenious and striking exposition of those evanescent and glancing impressions of objects which affect us more from surprise or contrast to the train of our ordinary and literal preconceptions, than from anything in the objects themselves exciting our necessary sympathy or lasting hatred. The favourite employment of wit is to add littleness to littleness, and heap contempt on insignificance by all the arts of petty and incessant warfare ; or if it ever affects to aggrandise, and use the language of hyperbole, it is only to betray into derision by a fatal comparison, as in the mock-heroic ; or if it treats of serious passion, it must do it so as to lower the tone of intense and high-wrought sentiment, by the introduction of burlesque and familiar circumstances. . . .

Sir Robert Walpole's definition of the gratitude of place expectants, 'That it is a lively sense of *future* favours,' is no doubt wit, but it does not consist in the finding out any coincidence or likeness, but in suddenly transposing the order of time in the common account of this feeling, so as to make the professions of those who pretend to it correspond more with their practice. It is filling up a blank in the human heart with a word that explains its hollowness at once. Voltaire's saying, in answer to a stranger who was observing how tall his trees grew—'That they had nothing else to do'—was a quaint mixture of wit and humour, making it out as if they really led a lazy, laborious life ; but there

was here neither allusion or metaphor. Again, that master-stroke in Hudibras is sterling wit and profound satire, where speaking of certain religious hypocrites he says, that they

> 'Compound for sins they are inclin'd to,
> By damning those they have no mind to;'

but the wit consists in the truth of the character, and in the happy exposure of the ludicrous contradiction between the pretext and the practice; between their lenity towards their own vices, and their severity to those of others. . . .

Wit is, in fact, a voluntary act of the mind, or exercise of the invention, showing the absurd and ludicrous consciously, whether in ourselves or another.

The author Introduces his Subject with a general statement which the Argument explains in detail; assigning, in a sentence, the causes of tears and of laughter, which are to be completely analysed.

He begins his Argument by shewing how the subject in hand has to do with whole of life; and slightly expands the general statement of the Introduction. Detailed analysis begins with a brief definition of the serious; goes on to enumerate the various elements of the comic: the laughable, as in the sudden interruption of the simple succession of events, contradicting expectation; the ludicrous, due to the same cause, but heightened by 'some deformity or inconvenience'; the ridiculous, also due to the same cause, but carried to a point contrary to reason and propriety.

Of these, the first is most 'shallow and short-lived'; the second, deeper and more lasting; the third, most refined; and when carried to extremes becoming satire. The principle is same in all: the effect of contrast. Examples are adduced. Note that we only laugh at those misfortunes of which we are spectators. There is provocation to laughter in the mere obligation to

refrain from it. 'Unconsciousness in the person himself of what he is about,' has the effect of absurdity. Wit is the more forcible for being 'dry and serious.' Irony, which is a species of wit, gains its effect from the contrast between appearance and reality. Excessive impudence, excessive modesty, or a mixture of the two, are amusing. Examples are adduced. In this way, lying is a species of wit and humour. Definition of Humour and Wit: 'Humour is the describing the ludicrous as it is in itself; wit is the exposing of it, by comparing or contrasting it with something else.' The definition is enlarged and illustrated by quotation. 'That wit is the most refined and effectual which is founded on the detection of unexpected likeness or distinction in things, rather than in words . . . a voluntary act of the mind, or exercise of the invention, showing the absurd and ludicrous consciously, whether in ourselves or another.'

XXII

THE COMEDY OF SHAKESPEARE

HERE, again, is a subject with which it will be better for you to deal through the writings of others. In the last section, we investigated the nature of the Comic in general. We have now to consider the particular instance of Shakespeare's presentment of the Comic element in life. What is Comedy? It is the exhibition of the laughable or the ludicrous (as defined in the last section). When these are pushed to their extreme, resulting in the ridiculous, comedy becomes what is called Farce. And in the comic, as we have seen, wit and humour are indissolubly connected: since humour invents or perceives the value of a given situation, and wit expresses that perception. Bearing these definitions in mind, we are so far prepared to consider the comedy of Shakespeare. But, before doing so, in order to define strictly the limit of our investigations, we must understand in what consists the opposite of Comedy — Tragedy.

In the last Example, the tragic was defined as follows:—'The serious is the habitual stress which the mind lays upon the expectation of a given order of events, following one another with a certain regularity and weight of interest attached to them. When this

stress is increased beyond its usual pitch of intensity, so as to overstrain the feelings by the violent opposition of good to bad, or of objects to our desires, it becomes the pathetic or tragical.' So far, so good; but we must go farther.

Tragedy, in the first place, deals with the greatest actions known to man. The work of the Greek Tragedians is the greatest literature in the world. 'Tragedy,' says Aristotle, 'is an imitation' (using the word in the Aristotelian sense of an idealised portrayal) 'of an action that is serious, complete, and of a certain magnitude.' Tragedy is designed to satisfy what Plato calls the natural hunger after sorrow and weeping; and in satisfying that hunger, it excites pity and terror; and in so doing, according to Aristotle, effects the purgation of these emotions. What that purgation means, we need not now stop to inquire.

Tragedy, then, deals with those great actions which excite the emotions of pity and terror; and in so doing, as we saw in Section XVIII., it ministers the highest degree of pleasure. 'Hence, the tragic hero,' says Professor Butcher, 'is a man not of flawless perfection, nor yet of consummate villainy; by which we must not understand that he has merely average or mediocre qualities. . . . So much human nature must there be in him that we are able in some sense to identify ourselves with him, to make our misfortunes his own. . . . He is a prince or famous man who falls from a height of greatness. . . . The case which answers all the requirements of art . . . is that of a man who morally stands midway between the two extremes. He is not eminently good or just, though he leans to the side of goodness. He is involved in misfortune, not, however, as the result of deliberate vice, but through some great flaw of character or fatal error in conduct. He is,

moreover, illustrious in rank and fortune; the chief motive, no doubt, for this requirement being that the signal nature of the catastrophe may be more strikingly exhibited.'[1]

Here, then, we have in plain words the broad definition of the tragical; for illustration, refer to Shakespeare's *King Richard the Third*; of which Professor Butcher remarks that 'the ancient drama offers nothing comparable to this great spectacle.' Shakespeare is supreme in tragedy: what of his comedy? You have read some at least of the comedies: before beginning to study the Example, recall to your mind your impressions of Shakespearian comedy, in the light of the analysis of the nature of comedy which we completed in the last section; and ask yourself, how far the comedy of Shakespeare accords with the definition at which we arrived. It is likely that you will come to no very lucid conclusion; but it will suffice if you perceive the difficulty of the problem. You may find help, at this point, in Professor Butcher's account of Aristotle's definition of comedy. 'Certain imperfections . . . will probably always be looked on as permanent features of our common humanity. With these defects comedy amuses itself, discovering the inconsistencies which underlie life and character, and exhibiting evil not as it is in its essential nature, but as a thing to be laughed at rather than hated.'

With this in your mind, read the Example, and remember that you are not obliged to agree with your author. In giving your account of his views, you may if you please comment upon them. As before, read the Example, first, with an eye to the general drift of the whole; again, marking the steps of the argument and their arrangement; and, finally, learn by heart those

[1] *Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art.* Butcher.

sentences and phrases which, conveying the gist of the matter, serve to remind you of the details of the argument and its illustrations.

Then, as before, make out your notes—which, by this time, you should be able to do without further help—and write a concise account of Hazlitt's views upon the Comedy of Shakespeare; stating his Central Idea, and admitting nothing into your composition which is not necessary in order to explain and to illustrate it.

EXAMPLE XXII

THE COMEDY OF SHAKESPEARE

William Hazlitt (1778-1830)

ENGLISH COMIC WRITERS. LECTURE II. SHAKESPEARE AND BEN JONSON

Dr. Johnson thought Shakespeare's comedies better than his tragedies, and gives as a reason, that he was more at home in the one than in the other. That comedies should be written in a more easy and careless vein than tragedies is but natural. This is only saying that a comedy is not so serious a thing as a tragedy. But that he showed a greater mastery in the one than the other, I cannot allow, nor is it generally felt. . . . It is in fact the established rule at present, in these cases, to speak highly of the Doctor's authority, and to dissent from almost every one of his critical decisions. For my own part I so far consider this preference given to the comic genius of the poet as erroneous and unfounded, that I should say that he is the only tragic poet in the world in the highest sense, as being on a par with, and the same as, Nature in her greatest heights and depths of action and suffering. There

is but one who durst walk within that mighty circle, treading the utmost bound of nature and passion, showing us the dread abyss of woe in all its ghastly shapes and colours, and laying open all the faculties of the human soul to act, to think, and suffer, in direst extremities; whereas I think, on the other hand, that in comedy, though his talents there too were as wonderful as they were delightful, yet that there were some before him, others on a level with him, and many close behind him. I cannot help thinking, for instance, that Molière was as great or a greater comic genius than Shakespeare, though assuredly I do not think that Racine was as great or a greater tragic genius. I think that both Rabelais and Cervantes, the one in the power of ludicrous description, the other in the invention and perfect keeping of comic character, excelled Shakespeare; that is, they would have been greater men, if they had had equal power with him over the stronger passions. For my own reading, I like Vanbrugh's 'City Wives' Confederacy' as well, or ('not to speak it profanely') better than the 'Merry Wives of Windsor,' and Congreve's 'Way of the World' as well as the 'Comedy of Errors' or 'Love's Labour's Lost.' But I cannot say that I know of any tragedies in the world that make even a tolerable approach to 'Hamlet,' or 'Lear,' or 'Othello,' or some others, either in the sum total of their effect, or in their complete distinctness from everything else, by which they take not only unquestioned, but undivided possession of the mind, and form a class, a world by themselves, mingling with all our thoughts like a second being. Other tragedies tell for more or less, are good, bad, or indifferent, as they have more or less excellence of a kind common to them with others; but these stand alone by themselves; they have nothing common-place in them; they are a new power in the imagination, they tell for their whole amount, they measure from the ground. There is not only nothing so good (in my judgment) as 'Hamlet,' or 'Lear,' or 'Othello,' or 'Macbeth,' but there is nothing like 'Hamlet,' or 'Lear,' or 'Othello,' or 'Macbeth.' There

is nothing, I believe, in the majestic Corneille, equal to the stern pride of 'Coriolanus,' or which gives such an idea of the crumbling in pieces of the Roman grandeur, 'like an unsubstantial pageant faded,' as the 'Antony and Cleopatra.' But to match the best serious comedies, such as Molière's 'Misanthrope' and his 'Tartuffe,' we must go to Shakespeare's tragic characters, the 'Timon of Athens' or honest Iago, when we shall more than succeed. He put his strength into his tragedies, and played with comedy. He was greatest in what was greatest; and his *forte* was not trifling, according to the opinion here combated, even though he might do that as well as any one else, unless he could do it better than anybody else. I would not be understood to say that there are not scenes or whole characters in Shakespeare equal in wit and drollery to anything upon record. Falstaff alone is an instance which, if I would, I could not get over. 'He is the leviathan of all the creatures of the author's comic genius, and tumbles about his unwieldy bulk in an ocean of wit and humour.' But in general it will be found (if I am not mistaken) that even in the very best of these, the spirit of humanity and the fancy of the poet greatly prevail over the mere wit and satire, and that we sympathise with his characters oftener than we laugh at them. His ridicule wants the sting of ill-nature. He had hardly such a thing as spleen in his composition. Falstaff himself is so great a joke, rather from his being so huge a mass of enjoyment than of absurdity. His reappearance in the 'Merry Wives of Windsor' is not 'a consummation devoutly to be wished,' for we do not take pleasure in the repeated triumphs over him. Mercutio's quips and banter upon his friends show amazing gaiety, frankness, and volubility of tongue, but we think no more of them when the poet takes the words out of his mouth and gives the description of Queen Mab. Touchstone, again, is a shrewd, biting fellow, a lively, mischievous wag; but still what are his gibing sentences and chopped logic to the fine moralising vein of the fantastical Jacques, stretched beneath 'the shade

of melancholy boughs?' Nothing.[1] That is, Shakespeare was a greater poet than wit; his imagination was the leading and master-quality of his mind, which was always ready to soar into its native element: the ludicrous was only secondary and subordinate. In the comedies of gallantry and intrigue, with what freshness and delight we come to the serious and romantic parts! What a relief they are to the mind, after those of mere ribaldry or mirth! Those in 'Twelfth Night,' for instance, and 'Much Ado about Nothing,' where Olivia and Hero are concerned, throw even Malvolio and Sir Toby, and Benedick and Beatrice, into the shade. They 'give a very echo to the seat where love is throned.' What he has said of music might be said of his own poetry—

> 'Oh! it came o'er the ear like the sweet south
> Breathing upon a bank of violets,
> Stealing and giving odour.'

How poor, in general, what a falling-off, these parts seem in mere comic authors; how ashamed we are of them; and how fast we hurry the blank verse over, that we may get upon safe ground again, and recover our good opinion of the author! A striking and lamentable instance of this may be found (by any one who chooses) in the high-flown speeches in Sir Richard Steele's 'Conscious Lovers.' As good an example as any of this informing and redeeming power in our author's genius might be taken from the comic scenes in both parts of 'Henry IV.' Nothing can go much lower in intellect or morals than many of the characters. Here are knaves and fools in abundance, of the meanest order, and stripped stark-naked. But genius, like charity, 'covers a multitude of sins'; we pity as much as we despise them; in spite of our disgust we like them, because they like themselves, and because we are made to sympathise with them;

[1] Hazlitt is of course speaking only of the particular effect of certain qualities upon his particular temperament, compared with the effect of certain other qualities. No man can do more. He differs from Dr. Johnson; and yet, both may be in the right.

and the ligament, fine as it is, which links them to humanity is never broken. Who would quarrel with Wart or Feeble, or Mouldy or Bull-calf, or even with Pistol, Nym, or Bardolph? None but a hypocrite. The severe censurers of the morals of imaginary characters can generally find a hole for their own vices to creep out at; and yet do not perceive how it is that the imperfect and even deformed characters in Shakespeare's plays, as done to the life, by forming a part of our personal consciousness, claim our personal forgiveness, and suspend or evade our moral judgment, by bribing our self-love to side with them. Not to do so, is not morality, but affectation, stupidity, or ill-nature. I have more sympathy with one of Shakespeare's pick-purses, Gadshill or Peto, than I can possibly have with any member of the Society for the Suppression of Vice, and would by no means assist to deliver the one into the hands of the other. Those who cannot be persuaded to draw a veil over the foibles of ideal characters, may be suspected of wearing a mask over their own! Again, in point of understanding and attainments, Shallow sinks low enough; and yet his cousin Silence is a foil to him; he is the shadow of a shade, glimmers on the very verge of downright imbecility, and totters on the brink of nothing. 'He has been merry twice or once ere now,' and is hardly persuaded to break his silence in a song. Shallow has 'heard the chimes at midnight,' and roared out glees and catches at taverns and inns of court, when he was young. So, at least, he tells his cousin Silence, and Falstaff encourages the loftiness of his pretensions. Shallow would be thought a great man among his dependants and followers; Silence is nobody—not even in his own opinion: yet he sits in the orchard, and eats his caraways and pippins among the rest. Shakespeare takes up the meanest subjects with the same tenderness that we do an insect's wing, and would not kill a fly. . . .

The fault, then, of Shakespeare's comic Muse is, in my opinion, that it is too good-natured and magnanimous. It mounts above its quarry. It is 'apprehensive, quick, for-

getive, full of nimble, fiery, and delectable shapes' ; but it does not take the highest pleasure in making human nature look as mean, as ridiculous, and contemptible as possible. It is in this respect chiefly that it differs from the comedy of a later, and (what is called) a more refined period. Genteel comedy is the comedy of fashionable life, and of artificial character and manners. The most pungent ridicule is that which is directed to mortify vanity and expose affectation ; but vanity and affectation, in their most exorbitant and studied excesses, are the ruling principles of society only in a highly advanced state of civilisation and manners. Man can hardly be said to be a truly contemptible animal, till, from the facilities of general intercourse and the progress of example and opinion, he becomes the ape of the extravagances of other men. The keenest edge of satire is required to distinguish between the true and false pretensions to taste and elegance ; its lash is laid on with the utmost severity, to drive before it the common herd of knaves and fools, not to lacerate and terrify the single stragglers. In a word, it is when folly is epidemic, and vice worn as a mark of distinction, that all the malice of wit and humour is called out and justified to detect the imposture, and prevent the contagion from spreading. The fools in Wycherley and Congreve are of their own, or one another's making, and deserve to be well scourged into common sense and decency : the fools in Shakespeare are of his own or nature's making ; and it would be unfair to probe to the quick, or hold up to unqualified derision, the faults which are involuntary and incorrigible, or those which you yourself encourage and exaggerate from the pleasure you take in witnessing them. Our later comic writers represent a state of manners, in which to be a man of wit and pleasure about town was become the fashion, and in which the swarms of egregious pretenders in both kinds openly kept one another in countenance, and were become a public nuisance. Shakespeare, living in a state of greater rudeness and simplicity, chiefly gave certain characters which were a kind of *grotesques*, or solitary excrescences growing up out of their

native soil without affectation, and which he undertook kindly to pamper for the public entertainment. For instance, Sir Andrew Aguecheek is evidently a creature of the poet's own fancy. . . .

I do not, in short, consider comedy as exactly an affair of the heart or the imagination ; and it is for this reason only that I think Shakespeare's comedies deficient. I do not, however, wish to give a preference to any comedies over his ; but I do perceive a difference between his comedies and some others that are, notwithstanding, excellent in their way, and I have endeavoured to point out in what this difference consists, as well as I could. Finally, I will not say that he had not as great a natural genius for comedy as any one ; but I may venture to say, that he had not the same artificial models and regulated mass of fashionable absurdity or elegance to work upon. . . .

XXIII

ON A HUNDRED YEARS HENCE

HERE is an example of the Informal Essay, which is defined by Dr. Johnson as a 'loose sally of the mind.' The title is a mere label; a peg on which to hang as many detached thoughts—grave or gay—as you please. What will happen a hundred years hence? We cannot tell; but we know, at least, that all those things which please or vex us now, will neither gladden nor trouble us any more. 'It will be all the same a hundred years hence.'

As we saw in the last section, 'certain imperfections' will in all probability always be considered as 'permanent features of our common humanity'; and we may add that, on the other hand, certain pleasures will continue to be regarded in the same light. As you are to limit your essay to the discussion of a single aspect of any given subject; you must choose one particular kind of 'imperfection,' or one particular kind of pleasure, whose nature you are to explain and to illustrate, in the light of the reflection that it will be all the same a hundred years hence. In the Informal Essay, there need be no definite Central Idea. It is more of the nature of a conversation—a *causerie*—than a reasoned argument; a kind of composition in which the only

rules to be observed are those regulating the Introduction and the Conclusion. And, as in conversation, anecdote and allusion are freely admissible; for, your object in this case is, not to instruct but, to amuse; to play with the subject, rather than to treat it seriously.

In the Example, the particular 'imperfection' of 'our common humanity,' selected by the author, is the habit of indulging in gossip and scandal. The Introduction consists of a little description of a round game—which very likely suggested to the author's mind the rest of the 'essaykin'—and the reflections he makes upon it give rise to further reflections, and so on, till the paper is filled, and he concludes with the remark that these things will always be,—and what will it matter a hundred years hence? The plan is simple; anyone can follow the plan; 'tis the execution that is difficult, being purely a matter of personal endowment. Either you have the knowledge and the wit to amuse your reader over three or four pages or so; or you have not. Unlike the Formal Essay which you have been studying for so long, the Informal Essay cannot be written by rule.

And it is because this kind of writing is purely a matter of personal endowment, that the style of Thackeray is no model for imitation. His style expressed himself; if you imitate the style, you do but ape the man. Nevertheless, his style presents certain qualities worthy of all imitation; elegance, ease, and urbanity. A study of the Example will shew you that in order to be conversational, it is not necessary to be familiar, vulgar, and incorrect.

Having studied the Example with these things in your mind, select an aspect of some particular trouble or pleasure, reflect upon it in the light of that undeniable maxim, It will be all the same a hundred years hence, and write an Informal Essay thereon.

EXAMPLE XXIII

ON A HUNDRED YEARS HENCE

WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY (1811-1863)

ROUNDABOUT PAPERS

Where have I just read of a game played at a country house? The party assembles round a table, with pens, ink, and paper. Some one narrates a tale containing more or less incidents and personages. Each person of the company then writes down, to the best of his memory and ability, the anecdote just narrated, and finally the papers are to be read out. I do not say I should like to play often at this game, which might possibly be a tedious and lengthy pastime, not by any means so amusing as smoking a cigar in the conservatory; or even listening to the young ladies playing their piano-pieces; or to Hobbs and Nobbs lingering round the bottle and talking over the morning's run with the hounds; but surely it is a moral and ingenious sport. They say the variety of narratives is often very odd and amusing. The original story becomes so changed and distorted that at the end of all the statements you are puzzled to know where the truth is at all. As time is of small importance to the cheerful persons engaged in this sport, perhaps a good way of playing it would be to spread it over a couple of years. Let the people who played the game in '60 all meet and play it once more in '61, and each write his story over again. Then bring out your original and compare notes. Not only will the stories differ from each other, but the writers will probably differ from themselves. In the course of the year the incidents will grow or will dwindle strangely. The least authentic of the statements will be so lively or so malicious, or so neatly put, that it will appear most like the truth. I like these tales and sportive exercises. I had

begun a little print collection once. I had Addison in his nightgown in bed at Holland House, requesting young Lord Warwick to remark how a Christian should die. I had Cambronne clutching his cocked-hat, and uttering the immortal 'La Garde meurt et ne se rend pas.' I had the *Vengeur* going down, and all the crew hurraying like madmen. I had Alfred toasting the muffin; Curtius (Haydon) jumping into the gulf; with extracts from Napoleon's bulletins, and a fine authentic portrait of Baron Munchausen.

What man who has been before the public at all has not heard similar wonderful anecdotes regarding himself and his own history? In these humble essaykins I have taken leave to egotise. I cry out about the shoes which pinch me, and, as I fancy, more naturally and pathetically than if my neighbour's corns were trodden under foot. I prattle about the dish which I love, the wine which I like, the talk I heard yesterday—about Brown's absurd airs—Jones's ridiculous elation when he thinks he has caught me in a blunder (a part of the fun, you see, is that Jones will read this, and will perfectly well know that I mean him, and that we shall meet and grin at each other with entire politeness). This is not the highest kind of speculation, I confess, but it is a gossip which amuses some folks. A brisk and honest small-beer, will refresh those who do not care for the frothy outpourings of heavier taps. A two of clubs may be a good handy little card sometimes, and able to tackle a king of diamonds, if it is a little trump. Some philosophers get their wisdom with deep thought, and out of ponderous libraries; I pick up my small crumbs of cogitation at a dinner-table; or from Mrs. Mary and Miss Louisa, as they are prattling over their five-o'clock tea. . . .

Suppose we were to invite volunteers amongst our respected readers to send in little statements of the lies which they know have been told about themselves: what a heap of correspondence, what an exaggeration of malignities, what a crackling bonfire of incendiary falsehoods, might we not gather together! And a lie once set going, having

the breath of life, breathed into it by the father of lying, and ordered to run its diabolical little course, lives with a prodigious vitality. You say, 'Magna est veritas et prævalebit.' Psha! Great lies are as great as great truths, and prevail constantly, and day after day. Take an instance or two out of my own little budget. I sit near a gentleman at dinner, and the conversation turns upon a certain anonymous literary performance which at the time is amusing the town. 'Oh,' says the gentleman, 'everybody knows who wrote that paper: it is Momus's.' I was a young author at the time, perhaps proud of my bantling: 'I beg your pardon,' I say, 'it was written by your humble servant.' 'Indeed!' was all that the man replied, and he shrugged his shoulders, turned his back, and talked to his other neighbour. I never heard sarcastic incredulity more finely conveyed than by that 'indeed.' 'Impudent liar,' the gentleman's face said, as clear as face could speak. Where was Magna Veritas, and how did she prevail then? She lifted up her voice, she made her appeal, and she was kicked out of court. In New York I read a newspaper criticism one day (by an exile from our shores who has taken up his abode in the Western Republic), commenting upon a letter of mine which had appeared in a contemporary volume, and wherein it was stated that the writer was a lad in such and such a year, and in point of fact, I was, at the period spoken of, nineteen years of age. 'Falsehood, Mr. Roundabout,' says the noble critic: 'you were then not a lad; you were then six-and-twenty years of age.' You see he knew better than papa and mamma and parish register. It was easier for him to think and say I lied, on a twopenny matter connected with my own affairs, than to imagine he was mistaken. . . .

How comes it that the evil which men say spreads so widely and lasts so long, whilst our good kind words don't seem somehow to take root and bear blossom? Is it that in the stony hearts of mankind these pretty flowers can't find a place to grow? Certain it is that scandal is good brisk talk, whereas praise of one's neighbour is by no means lively

hearing. An acquaintance grilled, scored, devilled, and served with mustard and cayenne pepper excites the appetite ; whereas a slice of cold friend with currant jelly is but a sickly unrelishing meat.

Now, such being the case, my dear worthy Mrs. Candour, in whom I know there are a hundred good and generous qualities : it being perfectly clear that the good things which we say of our neighbours don't fructify, but somehow perish in the ground where they are dropped, whilst the evil words are wafted by all the winds of scandal, take root in all soils, and flourish amazingly—seeing, I say that this conversation does not give us a fair chance, suppose we give up censoriousness altogether, and decline uttering our opinions about Brown, Jones, and Robinson (and Mesdames B., J., and R.) at all. We may be mistaken about every one of them, as, please goodness, those anecdote-mongers against whom I have uttered my meek protest have been mistaken about me. We need not go to the extent of saying that Mrs. Manning was an amiable creature much misunderstood; and Jack Thurtell, a gallant unfortunate fellow, not near so black as he was painted ; but we will try and avoid personalities altogether in talk, won't we? We will range the fields of science, dear madam, and communicate to each other the pleasing results of our studies. We will, if you please, examine the infinitesimal wonders of nature through the microscope. We will cultivate entomology. We will sit with our arms round each other's waists on the *pons asinorum*, and see the stream of mathematics flow beneath. We will take refuge in cards, and play at 'beggar my neighbour,' not abuse my neighbour. We will go to the Zoological Gardens and talk freely about the gorilla and his kindred, but not talk about people who can talk in their turn. Suppose we praise the High Church ? we offend the Low Church. The Broad Church ? High and Low are both offended. What do you think of Lord Derby as a politician ? And what is your opinion of Lord Palmerston ? If you please, will you play me those lovely variations

of 'In a cottage near a wood'? It is a charming air (you know it in French, I suppose? *Ah! te dirai-je, maman?*) and was a favourite with poor Marie Antoinette. I say 'poor,' because I have a right to speak with pity of a sovereign who was renowned for so much beauty and so much misfortune. But as for giving any opinion on her conduct, saying that she was good or bad, or indifferent, goodness forbid! We have agreed we will not be censorious. Let us have a game at cards—at *écarté*, if you please. You deal. I ask for cards. I lead the deuce of clubs.[1] . . .

What? there is no deuce! Deuce take it! What? People *will* go on talking about their neighbours, and won't have their mouths stopped by cards, or ever so much microscopes and aquariums? Ah, my poor dear Mrs. Candour, I agree with you. By the way, did you ever see anything like Lady Godiva Trotter's dress last night? People *will* go on chattering, although we hold our tongues; and, after all, my good soul, what will their scandal matter a hundred years hence?

[1] It was this kind of airy persiflage which used to inspire some people to characterise the late Mr. Thackeray as a 'cynic.'

XXIV

THE ENGLISH ADMIRALS

THERE is no uncertainty as to the meaning of the title, or any doubt that the subject indicated thereby is historical. The first step is, as usual, Reflection; even assuming that you know little or nothing of the long and famous line of English Admirals; for, you are (at least) aware that England has for centuries played a great part in the wars of the sea; and that, since Nelson defeated the united navies of France and Spain at the Battle of Trafalgar, England's naval supremacy has remained unchallenged. Considering these things, you are to ask yourself, What manner of men must these English Admirals have been? I am assuming the minimum of historical knowledge on your part; but, if you know aught of the exploits of Sir Francis Drake, of Sir Richard Grenville—'At Flores in the Azores'—of Blake, Howe, Rodney, Benbow, of Nelson, your preliminary reflection will be the more fruitful. It should at least serve to awaken in you a lively curiosity with regard to the character of these heroes, and the nature of their exploits. You will then be prepared to undertake a certain amount of historical research. Any standard book of English history will give you some of the information you require; but, if possible, you should consult James' *Naval History*, Southey's *Life of*

Nelson, or the illustrated work on *Nelson and His Times*, by Lord Charles Beresford and Mr. H. W. Wilson, Mr. Fitchett's *Nelson and his Captains*, Mr. Laird Clowes' *The Royal Navy*, the same author's *Types of Naval Officers*, and, especially, *Our Naval Heroes*, edited by Mr. G. E. Marindin, which contains 'short lives of nineteen of our most famous Admirals, related in nearly every case by one of their descendants, and when possible by the head of the family.'

Having collected your material, and reduced it to a system of notes, read the Example; first (as usual) with intent to grasp the general effect of the whole essay; and again, to see how that effect has been attained.

EXAMPLE XXIV

THE ENGLISH ADMIRALS

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON (1850-1894)

VIRGINIBUS PUERISQUE

'Whether it be wise in men to do such actions or no, I am sure it is so in States to honour them.'—SIR WILLIAM TEMPLE.

There is one story of the wars of Rome which I have always very much envied for England. Germanicus was going down at the head of the legions into a dangerous river—on the opposite bank the woods were full of Germans—when there flew out seven great eagles which seemed to marshal the Romans on their way; they did not pause or waver, but disappeared into the forest where the enemy lay concealed. 'Forward!' cried Germanicus, with a fine rhetorical inspiration, 'Forward! and follow the Roman birds.' It would be a very heavy spirit that did not give a leap at such a signal, and a very timorous one that continued to have any doubt of success. To appropriate the eagles as fellow-countrymen was to make imaginary allies of the forces

of nature ; the Roman Empire and its military fortunes, and along with these the prospects of those individual Roman legionaries now fording a river in Germany, looked altogether greater and more hopeful. It is a kind of illusion easy to produce. A particular shape of cloud, the appearance of a particular star, the holiday of some particular saint, anything in short to remind the combatants of patriotic legends or old successes, may be enough to change the issue of a pitched battle ; for it gives to the one party a feeling that Right and the larger interests are with them.

If an Englishman wishes to have such a feeling, it must be about the sea. The lion is nothing to us ; he has not been taken to the hearts of the people, and naturalised as an English emblem. We know right well that a lion would fall foul of us as grimly as he would of a Frenchman or a Moldavian Jew, and we do not carry him before us in the smoke of battle. But the sea is our approach and bulwark ; it has been the scene of out greatest triumphs and dangers ; and we are accustomed in lyrical strains to claim it as our own. . . .

There is nowhere such a background for heroism as the noble, terrifying, and picturesque conditions of some of our sea fights. Hawke's battle in the tempest, and Aboukir at the moment when the French Admiral blew up, reach the limit of what is imposing to the imagination. And our naval annals owe some of their interest to the fantastic and beautiful appearance of old warships and the romance that invests the sea and everything sea-going in the eyes of English lads on a half-holiday at the coast. Nay, and what we know of the misery between decks enhances the bravery of what was done by giving it something for contrast. We like to know that these bold and honest fellows contrived to live, and to keep bold and honest, among absurd and vile surroundings. No reader can forget the description of the *Thunder* in *Roderick Random*:[1] the disorderly tyranny ; the cruelty

[1] By Tobias Smollett (1721-1771); descriptive of eighteenth-century sea-life.

and dirt of officers and men ; deck after deck, each with some new object of offence ; the hospital, where the hammocks were huddled together with but fourteen inches space for each ; the cockpit, far under water, where, 'in an intolerable stench,' the spectacled steward kept the accounts of the different messes ; and the canvas enclosure, six feet square, in which Morgan made flip and salmagundi, smoked his pipe, sang his Welsh songs, and swore his queer Welsh imprecations. There are portions of this business on board the *Thunder* over which the reader passes lightly and hurriedly, like a traveller in a malarious country. It is easy enough to understand the opinion of Dr. Johnson : 'Why, sir,' he said, 'no man will be a sailor who has contrivance enough to get himself into a jail.'

You would fancy any one's spirit would die out under such an accumulation of darkness, noisomeness, and injustice, above all when he had not come there of his own free will, but under the cutlasses and bludgeons of the press-gang. But perhaps a watch on deck in the sharp sea air put a man on his mettle again ; a battle must have been a capital relief ; and prize-money, bloodily earned and grossly squandered, opened the doors of the prison for a twinkling.[1] Somehow or other, at least, this worst of possible lives could not overlie the spirit and gaiety of our sailors ; they did their duty as though they had some interest in the fortune of that country which so cruelly oppressed them, they served their guns merrily when it came to fighting, and they had the readiest ear for a bold, honourable sentiment, or any class of men the world ever produced.

Most men of high destinies have high-sounding names. Pym and Habakkuk may do pretty well, but they must not think to cope with the Cromwells and Isaiahs. And you could not find a better case in point than that of the English Admirals. Drake and Rooke and Hawke are picked names for men of execution. Frobisher, Rodney, Boscawen, Foul-

[1] The three- or four-clause sentence of direct statement was a favourite usage of Stevenson's.

Weather, Jack Byron, are all good to catch the eye in a page of a naval history. Cloudesley Shovel is a mouthful of quaint and sounding syllables. Benbow has a bulldog quality that suits the man's character, and it takes us back to those English archers who were his true comrades for plainness, tenacity, and pluck. Raleigh is spirited and martial, and signifies an act of bold conduct in the field. It is impossible to judge of Blake or Nelson, no names current among men being worthy of such heroes. . . .

But it is the spirit of the men, and not their names, that I wish to speak about in this paper. That spirit is truly English; they, and not Tennyson's cotton-spinners or Mr. D'Arcy Thompson's Abstract Bagman, are the true and typical Englishmen. There may be more *head* of bagmen in the country, but human beings are reckoned by number only in political constitutions. And the Admirals are typical in the full force of the word. They are splendid examples of virtue, indeed, but of a virtue in which most Englishmen can claim a moderate share; and what we admire in their lives is a sort of apotheosis of ourselves. Almost everybody in our land, except humanitarians and a few persons whose youth has been depressed by exceptionally æsthetic surroundings, can understand and sympathise with an Admiral or a prize-fighter. I do not wish to bracket Benbow and Tom Cribb; but depend upon it, they are practically bracketed for admiration in the minds of many frequenters of ale-houses. If you told them about Germanicus and the eagles, or Regulus going back to Carthage, they would very likely fall asleep; but tell them about Harry Pearce and Jem Belcher, or about Nelson and the Nile, and they put down their pipes to listen. . . . And the exploits of the Admirals are popular to the same degree, and tell in all ranks of society. Their sayings and doings stir English blood like the sound of a trumpet; and if the Indian Empire, the trade of London, and all the outward and visible ensigns of our greatness should pass away, we should still leave behind us a durable monument

of what we were in these sayings and doings of the English Admirals.

Duncan, lying off the Texel with his own flagship, the *Venerable*, and only one other vessel, heard that the whole Dutch fleet was putting to sea. He told Captain Hotham to anchor alongside of him in the narrowest part of the channel, and fight his vessel till she sank. 'I have taken the depth of the water,' added he, 'and when the *Venerable* goes down, my flag will still fly.' And you observe this is no naked Viking in a prehistoric period; but a Scotch member of Parliament, with a smattering of the classics, a telescope, a cocked hat of great size, and flannel underclothing. In the same spirit, Nelson went into Aboukir with six colours flying; so that even if five were shot away, it should not be imagined he had struck. He too must needs wear his four stars outside his Admiral's frock, to be a butt for sharpshooters. 'In honour I gained them,' he said to objectors, adding with sublime illogicality, 'in honour I will die with them.' Captain Douglas of the *Royal Oak*, when the Dutch fired his vessel in the Thames, sent his men ashore, but was burned along with her himself rather than desert his post without orders. Just then, perhaps the Merry Monarch was chasing a moth round the supper-table with the ladies of his court. When Raleigh sailed into Cadiz, and all the forts and ships opened fire on him at once, he scorned to shoot a gun, and made answer with a flourish of insulting trumpets. I like this bravado better than the wisest dispositions to insure victory; it comes from the heart and goes to it. God has made nobler heroes, but he never made a finer gentleman than Walter Raleigh. And as our Admirals were full of heroic superstitions, and had a strutting and vain-glorious style of fight, so they discovered a startling eagerness for battle, and courted war like a mistress. When the news came to Essex before Cadiz that the attack had been decided, he threw his hat into the sea. It is in this way that a schoolboy hears of a half-holiday; but this was a bearded man of great posses-

sions who had just been allowed to risk his life. Benbow could not lie still in his bunk after he had lost his leg; he must be on deck in a basket to direct and animate the fight. I said they loved war like a mistress; yet I think there are not many mistresses we should continue to woo under similar circumstances. Trowbridge went ashore with the *Culloden*, and was able to take no part in the battle of the Nile. 'The merits of that ship and her gallant captain,' wrote Nelson to the Admiralty, 'are too well known to benefit by anything I could say. Her misfortune was great in getting aground, *while her more fortunate companions were in the full tide of happiness*.' This is a notable expression, and depicts the whole great-hearted, big-spoken stock of the English Admirals to a hair. It was to be 'in the full tide of happiness' for Nelson to destroy five thousand five hundred and twenty-five of his fellow-creatures, and have his own scalp torn open by a piece of langridge shot. Hear him again at Copenhagen: 'A shot through the main-mast knocked the splinters about; and he observed to one of his officers with a smile, "It is warm work, and this may be the last to any of us at any moment;" and then, stopping short at the gangway, added, with emotion, "*But, mark you—I would not be elsewhere for thousands!*"' . . .

Nor is it only in the profession of arms that such stories may do good to a man. In this desperate and gleeful fighting, whether it is Greenville or Benbow, Hawke or Nelson, who flies his colours in the ship, we see men brought to the test and giving proof of what we call heroic feeling. Prosperous humanitarians tell me, in my club smoking-room, that they are a prey to prodigious heroic feelings, and that it costs them more nobility of soul to do nothing in particular, than would carry on all the wars, by sea or land, of bellicose humanity. It may very well be so, and yet not touch the point in question. For what I desire is to see some of this nobility brought face to face with me in an inspiriting achievement. A man may talk smoothly over a cigar in my club smoking-room from now to the Day of Judgment, with-

out adding anything to mankind's treasury of illustrious and encouraging examples. It is not over the virtues of a curate-and-tea-party novel, that people are abashed into high resolutions. It may be because their hearts are crass, but to stir them properly they must have men entering into glory with some pomp and circumstance. And that is why these stories of our sea-captains, printed, so to speak, in capitals, and full of bracing moral influence, are more valuable to England than any material benefit in all the books of political economy between Westminster and Birmingham. . . .

The author Introduces his subject, you see, with a story that suggests his Central Idea; which may be described as the Picturesque Valour of the English Admirals. The 'imaginary alliance with the forces of nature,' which is the moral of the story of Germanicus and the eagles, serves the author as the transition to his Argument; whose first step is the explanation of the relation of Englishmen to the sea. It is an easy matter to pass from the sea to the life of the sailor; and thence to the exploits of great sea-captains. As much, and no more, is related of the Admirals, as serves to illustrate the Central Idea—their Picturesque Valiancy. The author has here nothing to do—for instance—with their qualities of seamanship, their talent for organisation, or their skill in naval tactics and strategy; which are all tenable points of view in dealing with the lives of British Admirals, but which are hardly to the present purpose. But any detail, however trivial, that illustrates his Central Idea, is introduced; the happy coincidence, for example, which fitted the Admirals with their 'high-sounding names'; and out of the multifarious incidents of their adventurous lives, the author selects only those exploits in which the hero did a fine thing with all the pomp and circumstance he could

muster. Follow, the reflections, which, naturally evoked by these records of 'desperate and gleeful fighting,' serve to make the Central Idea still plainer: the contrast of the 'prosperous humanitarian' whose smooth talk adds nothing — indeed, less than nothing — to 'mankind's treasury of illustrious and encouraging examples,' with the inspiriting examples of the great captains; and— in conclusion—the general application of the principle in question.

The essay is a model of its kind; spiritedly conceived, constructed and put together in a workmanlike manner; written with gaiety, eloquence, and wit.

You have now to choose your Central Idea. Select that which appeals to you most forcibly; and if it should be the same as that of the Example, you will find plenty to illustrate your theme, without borrowing from Mr. Stevenson's collection. Take the Example as your model; and, whatever your Central Idea may be, see that you set down nothing which does not serve to explain or to illustrate your meaning.

XXV

ESSAYS AND ESSAYISTS

THE following Example is a piece of criticism dealing with the particular kind of writing—the writing of Essays—which we have been studying so long. Now, to criticise, means to rate at a just value, to appreciate to shew in what consists the excellence of a work of art, and in what its imperfection. A fine critic is more rare, perhaps, than a fine artist; a consideration which—as a little reflection will shew you—does not deter a vast number of persons from producing a deal of worthless stuff under the delusion that they are contributing to the treasury of knowledge.

As a final exercise, take the Example, and write your own account of the author's views. With several of the essayists to which the Example refers—with Addison and Lamb, Hazlitt and Bacon and Ben Jonson—you have made acquaintance in these pages; the Example will help you to a just appreciation of them; and, with regard to your own practice, it will do you no harm to mark, learn and inwardly digest the observations of a great critic who is himself an artist in the craft of essay-writing.

EXAMPLE XXV

ESSAYS AND ESSAYISTS

W. E. HENLEY

VIEWS AND REVIEWS. VOL. I

It is our misfortune that of good essayists there should be but few. Men there have been who have done the essayist's part so well as to have earned an immortality in the doing; but we have had not many of them, and they make but a poor figure on our shelves. It is a pity that things should be thus with us, for a good essayist is th pleasantest companion imaginable. There are folk in plenty who have never read Montaigne at all; but there are few indeed who have read but a page of him, and that page but once. And the same may be said of Addison and Fielding, of Lamb and Hazlitt, of Sterne and Bacon and Ben Jonson, and all the members of their goodly fellowship. To sit down with any one of them is to sit down in the company of one of the 'mighty wits,' our 'elders and our betters,' who have done much to make literature a good thing, having written books that are eternally readable. If of all them that have tried to write essays and succeeded after a fashion a twentieth part so much could be said, the world would have a conversational literature of inexhaustible interest. But indeed there is nothing of the sort. Beside the 'rare' and 'radiant' masters of the art there are the apprentices, and these are many and dull.

Essayists, like poets, are born and not made, and for one worth remembering the world is confronted with a hundred not worth reading. Your true essayist is in a literary sense the friend of everybody.

As one of the brotherhood has phrased it, it is his function 'to speak with ease and opportunity to all men.' He must be personal, or his hearers can feel no manner of interest in him. He must be candid and sincere, or his

readers presently see through him. He must have learned to think for himself and to consider his surroundings with an eye that is both kindly and observant, or they straightway find his company unprofitable. He should have fancy, or his starveling propositions will perish for lack of metaphor and the tropes and figures needed to vitalise a truism. He does well to have humour, for humour makes men brothers, and is perhaps more influential in an essay than in most places else. He will find a little wit both serviceable to himself and comfortable to his readers. For wisdom, it is not absolutely necessary that he have it, but in its way it is as good a property as any: used with judgment, indeed, it does more to keep an essay sweet and fresh than almost any other quality. And in default of wisdom—which, to be sure, it is not given to every man, much less to every essayist, to entertain—he need have no scruples about using whatever common sense is his; for common sense is a highly respectable commodity, and never fails of a wide and eager circle of buyers. A knowledge of men and of books is also to be desired; for it is a writer's best reason of being, and without it he does well to hold his tongue. Blessed with these attributes he is an essayist to some purpose. Give him leisure and occasion, and his discourse may well become as popular as Montaigne's own.

For the British essayists, they are more talked about than known. It is to be suspected that from the first their reputation has greatly exceeded their popularity; and of late years, in spite of the declamation of Macaulay and the very literary enthusiasm of the artist of *Esmond* and *The Virginians*, they have fallen further into the background, and are less than ever studied with regard. In theory the age of Anne is still the Augustan age to us; but in theory only, and only to a certain extent. What attracts us is its outside. We are in love with its houses and its china and its costumes. We are not enamoured of it as it was, but as it seems to Mr. Caldecott and Mr. Dobson and Miss Kate Greenaway. We care little for its comedy and nothing at all for its tragedy. Its verse

is all that our own is not, and the same may be said of its prose and ours—of the prose of Mr. Swinburne and Mr. George Meredith and the prose of Addison and Swift. Mr. Gladstone is not a bit like Bolingbroke, and between *The Times* and *The Tatler*, between *The Spectator* (Mr. Addison's), and *The Fortnightly Review*, there is a difference of close upon two centuries and of a dozen revolutions—political, social, scientific, and æsthetic. We may babble as we please about the 'sweetness' of Steele and the 'humour' of Sir Roger de Coverley, but in our hearts we care for them a great deal less than we ought, and in fact Mr. Mudie's subscribers do not hesitate to prefer the 'sweetness' of Mr. Black and the 'humour' of Mr. James Payn.[1] Our love is not for the essentials of the time but only its accidents and oddities; and we express it in pictures and poems and fantasies in architecture, and the canonisation (in figures) of Chippendale and Sheraton. But it is questionable if we might not with advantage increase our interest, and carry imitation a little deeper. The Essayists, for instance, are often dull, but they write like scholars and gentlemen. They refrain from personalities; they let scandal alone, nor ever condescend to eavesdropping; they never go out of their way in search of affectation or prurience or melancholy, but are content to be merely wise and cheerful and humane. Above all, they do their work as well as they can. They seem to write not for bread nor for a place in society, but for the pleasure of writing, and of writing well. In these hysterical times life is so full, so much is asked and so much has to be given, that tranquil writing and careful workmanship are impossible. A certain poet has bewailed the change in a charming rondeau:—

'More swiftly now the hours take flight!
What's read at morn is dead at night;
Scant space have we for art's delays,
Whose breathless thought so briefly stays,
We may not work—ah! would we might,
With slower pen!'

[1] *See* Section XIV.

It must be owned that his melancholy is anything but groundless. The trick of amenity and good breeding is lost ; the graces of an excellence that is unobtrusive are graces no more. We write as men paint for the exhibitions : with the consciousness that we must pass without notice if we do not exceed in colour and subject and tone. The need exists, and the world bows to it. Mr. Austin Dobson's little sheaf of *Eighteenth Century Essays* might be regarded as a protest against the necessity and the submission. It proves that 'tis possible to be eloquent without adjectives and elegant without affectation ; that to be brilliant you need not necessarily be extravagant and cenceited ; that without being maudlin and sentimental it is not beyond mortal capacity to be pathetic ; and that once upon a time a writer could prove himself a humourist without feeling it incumbent upon him to be also a jack-pudding.

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APPENDIX

COMMON ERRORS IN THE USE OF WORDS AND THEIR INFLECTIONS

The object of the following examples is to enable the student to impress upon his memory the correct usage with regard to those common errors in the use of English, into which even practised writers (as will be seen) are liable to fall. A concrete example is readily remembered; indeed, without it, a knowledge of the rules of grammar in the abstract—which the student is presumed to have acquired—is of small practical value. The following brief exposition does not pretend to be exhaustive; for fuller information the student is referred to Dr. W. B. Hodgson's excellent work, *Errors in the Use of English* (David Douglas, Edinburgh); from which, by the kindness of the author's representatives and of his publisher, I have been permitted to quote. The cases in which errors most frequently occur are classified, for the sake of easy reference, under the headings of the several Parts of Speech.

ACCIDENCE

ARTICLE.

When one noun is qualified by several adjectives which cannot be regarded as describing the same thing, the article must be repeated.

'Philosophers rejected with equal fervour the established religious and the political creed.'—LESLIE STEPHEN, *Hours in a Library* (3rd series, 1879), ch. iii. p. 124. ['The' is rightly repeated before 'political,' but 'established' also ought perhaps to be repeated.][1]

'The creed of Zoroaster . . . supposes the co-existence of *a benevolent and malevolent principle*, which contend together without either being able decisively to prevail over his antagonist.'—Sir WALTER SCOTT, *Demonology*, p. 88. [Read 'and of a malevolent.'][1]

ADJECTIVE.

The errors of most frequent occurrence are those which concern the **degrees of comparison.** What we have to remember is this :—

An object can only be compared with an object or class of objects other than itself.

Or, if with itself, the comparison must refer to the said object at some different stage of its existence.

'The letters published after C. Lamb's death and that of his sister, by Mr. Talfourd, make up a volume of more interest to me than any [*other*] book of human composition.'—*Memoir of C. R. Leslie* (1860), vol. i. ch. ii. p. 54.[1]

'This work was, however, destined to cause Lady Morgan more trouble and annoyance than she met with in the whole of her literary life put together.'—*Lady M.'s Memoirs* (1862), vol. ii. p. 304. [Read 'in all the rest of her literary life put together.'][1]

With superlatives the case is opposite; they require a partitive genitive; and they must always be included in the class of things with which the comparison was made. *E.g.* with comparative: St. Paul's is greater than all the other London churches. But, with superlative: St. Paul's is the greatest of all the London churches.

The mistakes in the following passages are due to a confusion between the comparative and the superlative. The correction of the mistakes would lie in omitting *other*, *before*, in excluding words, or in changing the superlative to a comparative.

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[1] *Errors in the Use of English.* Prof. Hodgson. 7th edition. Douglas. Edin. 1896.

'The climate of Pau is perhaps the *most* genial, and the best suited to invalids of any *other* spot in France.'—Hon. J. E. MURRAY, *Summer in Pyrenees*, vol. i. p. 131. [Omit 'other.'][1]

'Being without a guide, we took a wrong path, used only by the shepherds, and certainly the steepest I ever climbed *before*.'—R. FERGUSON, *Swiss Men and Swiss Mountains* (1853), ch. xx. p. 137. [He ought to have said either 'the steepest I ever climbed,' or 'steeper than any that I had ever climbed.'][1]

'The very class who, *of all other* citizens, were least to be trusted.'—JOS. WILLIAMS, *The Rise and Fall of the Model Republic* (1863), p. 57.[1]

'*Who* [whom] they pronounce to be *of all others* the least fallible in their judgment.'—*Id.*, *ib.*, p. 71.[1]

PRONOUN.

As implied by its name, this word is used to supply the place of a noun; and as such it is not often wrongly employed. The only thing to remember is, that **the pronoun and the noun used in one and the same clause,** would result in a pleonasm; this is, however, permissible where much emphasis is needed.

'She had to wait for an hour in Lady Cumnor's morning-room, . . . till suddenly, Lady Harriet coming in, *she* exclaimed, "Why Clare! you dear woman! are you here all alone?"'—Mrs. GASKELL, *Wives and Daughters* (1867), ch. xxv. [Omit 'she,' and insert a comma after 'Harriet.'][1]

The substitution of *me*, *him*, *her*, etc., for *I*, *he*, *she*, is a fault of style; accepted by force of usage, but not literally correct. For instance, to the question: 'Who is there?' the answer is in nine cases out of ten, 'Me'; whereas it should be 'I.' 'He is taller than her,' should of course be 'than she,' and so on.

The relative pronoun refers to some person or thing already denoted by a noun or its equivalent, commonly called the Antecedent. Frequent mistakes occur in the use of the relative pronoun. A useful rule is: **Place the relative next to its antecedent.**

'Many a half-hour business men wasted with Mrs. Stern, trying to fish out the exact state of the chemist's concerns, *which* they thought afterwards might have been spent with about as much profit on the top of the Monument.'—*Too Much Alone* (1863),

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[1] *Errors in the Use of English.* Prof. Hodgson. 7th edition. Douglas. Edin. 1896.

ch. xii. p. 112. ['Which,' far removed from its real antecedent 'half-hour,' constructively relates to 'concerns.'][1]

'Mr. Disraeli delivered a rambling and disjointed string of jocosities and abstractions, by no means equal to his last Irish speech, *which* rather wearied the House.'—*Spectator*, 4th April, 1868, p. 393. [Here, 'which' constructively refers to 'speech'; whereas its real antecedent is 'string of jocosities and abstractions.' Read '*which was* by no means equal to his last Irish speech, *and which* rather wearied the House.'][1]

The instance last cited illustrates another useful rule, most frequently disregarded: In a sentence containing a series of qualifying clauses, in which the relative is used in the first clause, it must be used in the succeeding clauses, where it is usually preceded by *and*. As above:—'Mr. Disraeli delivered a rambling and disjointed string of jocosities and abstractions, *which* was by no means equal to his last Irish speech, *and which* rather wearied the House.' The same instance may serve to illustrate the common *and which* mistake: which is achieved by omitting the relative in the first qualifying clause, thus:—

'Mr. Disraeli delivered a rambling and disjointed string of jocosities and abstractions, by no means equal to his last Irish speech, *and which* rather wearied the House.' The defence is sometimes brought forward that the first relative is understood; but, although the argument may be supported by instances from the English classics, it is better to follow the indubitably correct modern usage. The same rules apply of course to the relative pronouns *who*, *that*.

***Who* and *that*, are often used indiscriminately**; but, in modern English, the use of *that* carries a distinct shade of meaning. *Who* or *which* connect two sentences co-ordinate in meaning, but the difference is not generally regarded, except that a preposition cannot stand before 'that' when 'that' is a relative; whereas *that* is 'the proper restrictive, explicative, limiting, or defining relative, the relative of the adjective sentence.'

'Margaret Finch, *who* died in 1740, was 109 years old.' This sentence consists of two co-ordinate clauses (clauses of equal value): 'Margaret Finch died in 1740, *and* was 109 years old.' Hence, 'who' is right.[1]

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[1] *Errors in the Use of English.* Prof. Hodgson. 7th edition. Douglas. Edin. 1896.

'There were very few passengers, *who* escaped without serious injury.'—*Times*, 8th January, 1867.[1]

Change 'who' into 'that' and the meaning is exactly reversed.

'Blessings on the man that invented sleep.'[1]

Here, since the sentence cannot be broken into co-ordinate clauses, 'that' is strictly correct.

The following sentence is an instructive example of the **right** (right with one exception, the omission of the second 'that') **use of relatives.**

'It is the belief in these, and a thousand other deceits I could mention, *which* teach man that he is not master of his own mind (co-ordinate, or qualifying clause), but the ordained victim or the chance sport of circumstances, *that* (antecedent "belief") makes millions pass through life, unimpressive as shadows; and [*that*] has gained for this existence the stigma of a variety *which* it does not deserve.'—DISRAELI'S *Vivian Grey*.[1]

An unjustifiable blunder is caused by **substituting the pronouns,** ***myself, yourself,*** etc., for ***I, you,*** etc., unless emphasis be required.

'Mr. Studer and *myself* had already decided on taking one man apiece as a personal attendant.'—Prof. P. FORBES, *Tour of Mont Blanc* (1855), ch. viii. p. 158.[1]

'A short time ago a letter appeared in your paper from *myself*.'—HILDRATH KAY, to *Manchester Examiner and Times*, 23rd September, 1856.[1]

'I do not know that Mr. Hall and *myself* ever enjoyed anything more,' etc.—Mrs. S. C. HALL, in *Morning Herald*, 23rd September, 1856.[1]

In some cases where emphasis is desirable, *these* or *those* should be used in preference to *they*.

'Their wages being inadequate, *they* who had laid up nothing, came immediately upon the parish; *they* who had either made some little provision themselves, or had received some from their fathers, were obliged to spend that first, and were then reduced to the necessity of joining the degraded ranks of applicants for parochial pay.'—JAS. STEVENS, *The Poor Laws* (1831), p. 75. [Read 'those.'][1]

'*They* [those historians] who have talents want industry or

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[1] *Errors in the Use of English.* Prof. Hodgson. 7th edition. Douglas. Edin. 1896.

virtue ; *they* [those] who have industry want talents.'—SOUTHEY, quoted in *Quarterly Review* (1844), vol. lxxiii. p. 54.[1]

VERB.

The Mood in which mistakes are most common is the Subjunctive, the tendency being to make it of the same sense as the Indicative.

'If the cavern into which they entered *were* of artificial construction, considerable pains had been taken to make it look natural.' —W. BLACK, *A Daughter of Heth* (7th ed., 1871), vol. ii. ch. xvi. p. 228. [Read 'was,' the writer meaning 'even if the cave,' 'although the cave.'][1]

'If he *is* ready when thus called upon, well is it for him, and he takes an important step either in temporal or in spiritual things, as the case may be. If he *be* not thus ready, self-reproach is his lot, and often shame and contempt.'—Rev. J. R. PRETYMAN, *Stray Thoughts*, quoted in *Colburn's N. M. Mag.*, September, 1871, p. 355. [For 'be' read 'is.'][1]

'If ever man's humour *were* useful to instruct as well as to delight, it is that of Michael Angelo Titmarsh.'—G. B. SMITH, *Poets and Novelists* (1875), p. 47, 'W. M. Thackeray.' [Read 'was.'][1]

The use of the Conditional where the Future should be used, is shewn in the following sentence :—

'Only let a few more ladies follow in the steps of Madame Luce, and Moors and Arabs be generally tempted into having their boys taught with the sons of Europeans, and the war about orthodoxy *would* gradually disappear.'—Miss M. B. EDWARDS, *A Winter with the Swallows* (1867), ch. xiv. p. 226. [Read 'will.'][1]

Coupled with the above is the common error of using the Future instead of the Indicative.

Polite letter-writers often say, 'I *shall have* great pleasure *in accepting your invitation*.' Here, the act of accepting being present, the present tense, 'I have,' is required, but the blunder is probably due to 'I *shall have* great pleasure in coming,' which is perfectly correct.[1]

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[1] *Errors in the Use of English.* Prof. Hodgson. 7th edition. Douglas. Edin. 1896.

Or we have mistakes produced by the awkward mixing of two constructions, as in the following :—

'*Were* it otherwise, and *we were* compelled to attire ourselves according to the feelings of another,' etc.—H. C. SIRR, *China and the Chinese* (1849), vol. i. p. 311. [Read 'were we compelled,' or *if* it were otherwise.'][1]

'*Could* her husband *have* ill afforded to buy new clothes, and *she had* been compelled to darn,' etc.—*Too Much Alone*, ch. vi. p. 56. [For 'she had' read 'had she.'][1]

'For neither *did I feel* the night breeze chill me, as we rushed through it, nor *partook*, in any sort, of the desire my companions testified to cover themselves from the rain.'—LOCKHART, *Valerius*, vol. ii. p. 199. [Read 'nor did I partake.'][1]

Another rule is frequently violated. We learn that **verbs connected by and, nor, than, etc., and referring to simultaneous acts, must agree in tense.** Yet we may mark the mistake in these examples.

'I never *was* so long in company with a girl in my life—trying to entertain her—and *succeed* so ill.'—Miss AUSTEN, *Mansfield Park*, vol. ii. p. 160. ['I never *was* . . . and *succeeded*.'][1]

The next error lies in the **use of the perfect form of the Infinitive instead of the simple and indefinite form,** after a perfect verb.

'I intended to have written,' instead of 'I intended to write'; the rule being that in making a present statement past, only the principal verb need change its tense. The following examples are correct :—

'I *should like* very much *to have seen* him.'—SYDNEY SMITH, let. cxlix. vol. ii. p. 164. [Better : 'I should have liked to see.'][1]

'There are many of the remaining portions of these Aphorisms, on which we should like to *have dwelt*,' etc.—*N. Brit. Rev.*, May, 1853, p. 105. ['Should have liked to dwell.'][1]

Participles used as a means of condensation often lead us astray, although in some cases they are valuable, since one finite clause with participle suffices (instead of two clauses, with two finite verbs).

'*Viewing* such a wealth of female beauty, and seeing on every hand so many charming faces and graceful figures, *I* am sometimes

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[1] *Errors in the Use of English.* Prof. Hodgson. 7th edition. Douglas. Edin. 1896.

disposed to look at our girls as the Scottish maiden looked at love —in the abstract.'—A. HALLIDAY, *Sunnyside Papers* (1866), ch. ix. p. 105. [1]

'Accident *having* opened a new and most congenial career to him, and *having* become a great favourite of and of much use to Mr. Nash, *he* ultimately accompanied his patron to London.'—C. J. MATHEWS, *Autobiography* (1879), vol. ii. p. 39. [Read, 'he became a great favourite . . . and ultimately,' etc.] [1]

These two examples illustrate the convenience and the dangers of this participial construction. The first is correct, 'Viewing figures' . . . 'figures' standing in apposition to the subject 'I.' The second is incorrect, owing to the use of two 'havings,' the one agreeing with 'accident,' the other being in apposition to the subject 'he,' but connected with its predecessor by 'and.' To avoid this error of 'misrelated participles' we cannot be too careful to leave no doubt as to the word in apposition.

The following examples are **cases in which the participle refers to nothing at all**; cases in which it refers merely **to a possessive pronoun**; and cases where the true relation is obscured by **faulty collocation.**

'*Having* thus asserted *his* prerogative, and put on his clothes with the help of a valet, the count with my nephew and me, *were* introduced by his son; and received with his usual style of rustic civility.'—SMOLLETT, *Humphrey Clinker* (3rd ed. of *Works*, by R. Anderson, 1806), vol. vi. p. 184. ['Having' here refers to the person whom the Count was visiting, as appears from the context. 'Were,' too, should be 'was.'] [1]

'Sir Charles Wetherell addressed the House [of Lords] for three hours . . .; when, *being* fatigued by his exertions, their lordships adjourned to the following day.'—*British Almanac* (1836), p. 198. [It would appear that their lordships were fatigued by *his* (Sir C. W.'s) exertions.] [1]

'*Amazed* at the alteration in his manner, every sentence that he uttered increased *her* embarrassment.'—Miss AUSTEN, *Pride and Prejudice*, ch. xliii. [1]

'*His* career was cut short in the youth of his popularity, *having* been killed in a duel by Aaron Burr.'—JOS. WILLIAMS, *The Rise and Fall of the Model Republic*, p. 232. [1]

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[1] *Errors in the Use of English.* Prof. Hodgson. 7th edition. Douglas. Edin. 1896.

'*Complaining* of a prickling sensation in his head, Matthew entreated *him* to abandon the use of liquor.'—Rev. C. ROGERS, *Leaves from My Autobiography* (1876), p. 283. [This is as if, not R. Tannahill the poet, but his brother Matthew, 'complained,' etc.][1]

'When *preparing* for his examinations, I had sometimes to rise from my own bed to urge *him* to retire to his.'—Dr. VAUGHAN, *Memoir of R. N. Vaughan* (1864), p. 9. [It should be 'when he was preparing,' etc.][1]

Although **faulty apposition** is commonest where participles are concerned, we must not lose sight of the fact that we may commit **the same error** with other parts of speech.

'The *person* about whom gathered almost as much interest as about the prisoner himself, *Lizzie's* appearance in the witness-box caused a profound sensation.'—Mrs. LYNN LINTON, *Lizzie Lorton*, vol. iii. p. 283. [Read, 'Lizzie, on her appearance in the box, caused,' etc.][1]

But in the following we have an incorrect passage; as 'that' should be 'the literature.'

'A fair scholar, he nevertheless revelled more in the loose and profligate literature of the Byzantine times than in *that* of the older classics.'—*Id.*, p. 108.[1]

Here, finally, we have a case of **imperfect apposition**:—

'A stranger to local politics, her parties were largely frequented by fashion as well as the learned of the city, and admission to them (was) eagerly coveted even by the graver departments of science.'—Sir H. HOLLAND, *Recollections of Past Life* (1872). The word 'her' refers to 'Mrs. Apreece,' and 'A stranger' refers to 'her' which in this connection becomes an adjective.[1]

A common mistake is **the insertion of *of* after a gerund**:—The starting *of* the machine. [Omit 'of.']

ADVERB.

Some writers use **adverbs instead of adjectives.** This is an ugly, inexcusably slovenly usage which should be steadily avoided.

'Campian looked back at the fair innocent creature, whose long dark curls, after the *then* country fashion, rolled down from

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beneath the hood below her waist.'—KINGSLEY, *Westward Ho!* (ed. 1879), ch. iv. p. 64. [Read 'ruling country fashion,' or 'country fashion of the day.'].[1]

'The *seldom use* of it.'—Archbishop TRENCH, *Select Glossary* (3rd ed., 1865), p. 109. [Read 'rare.'][1]

'My Lord Duke's entertainments were both *seldom* and shabby.' —THACKERAY, *Esmond*, bk. ii. ch. xiv. [Read 'rare,' 'few,' or 'infrequent.'][1]

'There are a few disagreeable matters of style [in Augusta Webster's Works], such as the repeated use of the adverb *almost* as an adjective, "an *almost* child;" and the same misuse of other adverbs, as in—"to think on the *once* themes is to be my *once* self;" and "joy at this house's *now* despair." Such things as these are too dreadful to criticise.'—H. B. FORMAN, *Our Living Poets* (1871), p. 173.[1]

Another gross error is that of **converting the adverb *otherwise*, to substantival purposes**, as in the following:—

'Boys or lads from all the schools competed, and their success or *otherwise* indicated whose teaching was most efficient.'—*Westminster Review*, January, 1873, p. 143. [Read, 'success or *failure*.'][1]

PREPOSITION.

Mr. Mason says: '**The original function of prepositions** was to give precision and definiteness to the somewhat vague ideas of the relation of actions to things, which was originally formally expressed by the case endings of nouns.' In English, case-endings are lost, with one exception, therefore prepositions play an unusually important part.

'To hunt her down as you would an outlaw, because forsooth she has dared to love a Catholic; and drag her home, to be forced . . . to renounce that Church *into* whose maternal bosom she has doubtless long since *found* rest and holiness!'—KINGSLEY, *Westward Ho!* (ed. 1879), ch. xiv. p. 240. ['Found rest *in*,' but 'fled for rest *into*.'][1]

'I really believe that, except *to* doctors and clergymen, and the very few intimate friends who have seen me frequently, even my state of extremity *has been doubted*.'—Miss MITFORD, *Letters and*

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[1] *Errors in the Use of English.* Prof. Hodgson. 7th edition. Douglas. Edin. 1896.

Life (2nd series, 1872), vol. ii. p. 147. ['Doubted *by*,' but 'seemed doubtful *to*.'][1]

'I think it must have been *to* some such primitive explanation of the whooping-cough that there *has grown up* in Austria the unique custom of treating that disease by administering the rod.'—M. D. CONWAY, *Fraser's Magazine*, May, 1873, p. 615, 'Vienna.' ['Has grown up *from*,' but 'is due *to*.'][1]

One preposition being used at the beginning of a sentence, another is sometimes used inadvertently in its place, later on :—

'The gossip of the time in which they live is certain to credit them continually *with* vices in which they do not indulge, and *in* faults which they do not commit.'—Prof. ROGERS, *Historical Gleanings*, p. 143.[1]

Then we come to **stereotyped errors,** which are almost universal, but whose frequency can never make them acceptable. In nine cases out of ten we find these objectionable combinations of words : **Different *to*** (from). **Averse *to*** (from). **Compare *to*** (with).

And the preposition *between* is also much misused. The notion conveyed by this word is one of duality, therefore it cannot be employed correctly with more than two objects of reference, or without a clear indication of the two objects. Thus, we cannot say :—

'He stood between several men whom he did not know.' The correct word here is naturally 'among.'

'Through Lessing, Mendelssohn subsequently became acquainted with Nicolai, and soon a close union was formed *between* those three young men.'—STAHR, *Life of Lessing*, translated by E. P. Evans (Boston, 1866), vol. i. p. 133.[1]

'The immense advantages of this system of communication *between* all who are working among the poor cannot be over estimated.'—*How to Relieve the Poor of Edinburgh* (1867), p. 15. [Read 'among.'][1]

Sometimes a dread of repetition leads the writer to **omit a preposition that is absolutely necessary** to complete the construction :—

'In either case, the Governments of Mr. Perceval and of Lord Liverpool, by their conduct towards Lord Wellington, placed them-

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[1] *Errors in the Use of English.* Prof. Hodgson. 7th edition. Douglas. Edin. 1896.

selves *in* a position it is to be regretted an English Government should appear.'—*Memoir of B. R. Haydon* (1876), vol. ii. p. 434, *note by editor*. [Read, '*in* a position *in which* it is to be regretted an English Government should appear.'][1]

'She is a wonder and a monument *of* what a human being in firm or infirm health is capable.'—Letter by S. MAY, in *Miss Martineau's Memorials* (1877), vol. iii. p. 444. [Read, '*of that of which* a human being is capable.'][1]

This omission may seriously affect the sense of the sentence :—

'Some time ago a royal warrant was issued providing for the withdrawal of medical officers in the army from regimental work, and their employment in general duty.'—*Scotsman*, 18th August, 1873, London Correspondent. ['For' should be here repeated, as 'from' might be understood.][1]

Or ambiguity of the same kind as the above is caused by **omitting a second infinitival** *to*.

'They forget to consult, and, as far as they are not vicious, conform to the tastes, feelings, habits, of those whose happiness they would promote, and think only of their own.'—W. J. FOX, *Christ and Christianity*, Works, vol. ii. p. 106. [The want of 'to' before 'conform' reverses the meaning.][1]

'Of all the eminent men of his time, he appears to have been the most sincere, and acted throughout in harmony with his own nature.'—TH. PURNELL, *Literature and its Professors* (1867), p. 140, 'Giraldus Cambrensis.' [Insert 'to have' before 'acted.'][1]

But confusion may arise by the **wrong repetition of a preposition**, or by its too frequent use in different connections.

'It would not suit the rules of art, nor *of* my own feelings, to write in that style.'—LESLIE STEPHEN, *Hours in a Library* (3rd series, 1879), ch. viii. p. 334. [Delete the second 'of' since the writer does not mean '*rules of* my own feelings.'][1]

'Perhaps we might venture to add, that it is hardly explicable, except as a portrait drawn *by* a skilful hand guided *by* love, and *by* love intensified *by* the consciousness of some impassable barrier.'—*Ib.*, ch. viii. p. 348. [Too many 'bys.'][1]

And finally, we may improve our style of writing and speaking

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[1] *Errors in the Use of English.* Prof. Hodgson. 7th edition. Douglas. Edin. 1896.

by remembering the elementary rule: **The preposition placed at the end of the sentence is both ugly and incorrect:—**

'This was not the book he referred to.' ['To which he referred.']
'Here is the oak I was leaning against.' ['Against which I was leaning.']
'The man we were speaking of.' ['Of whom we were speaking.']

CONJUNCTION.

Mistakes connected with this part of speech are less clearly defined. Still, they are none the less to be noticed, in order that they may be avoided. For instance, the absorption of the conjunctive participle *that* has transformed many real prepositions into conjunctions: *but, after, ere, before, for, till,* etc., etc. Thus, it becomes somewhat difficult to determine exactly how far this process may be carried. But the vulgar usage of *against* should be strictly avoided:—'Have it ready against I come.' Nor should we use *except,* which is a preposition, when we mean *unless,* which is a conjunction.

'It has no literary pretensions, *except* [unless] the total absence of all pretension may pass for one in these days of abundant conceit.'—Miss MITFORD, *Letters and Life* (2nd series, 1872), vol. i. p. 150.[1]
'You know, my uncle declared he would not suffer me to return *without* [unless] my mamma desired it.'—*Sidney Biddulph*, vol. iv. p. 276.[1]

Nor should we employ the adverb *like* when the words needed are *like as* or simply *as*; a gross error which has become so common in conversation that there is a danger of its affecting the rule of English—'usage.'

'Then, with ingenuous vanity, and forgetting grammar in gush, he [C. Dickens] protests: "Nobody will miss her *like* I shall."'—*Temple Bar*, May, 1873, p. 183, on 'Jn. Forster's Life of C. Dickens.'[1]

Another danger lies in the use of *directly* when *as soon as* is required and understood.

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[1] *Errors in the Use of English.* Prof. Hodgson. 7th edition. Douglas. Edin. 1896.

With conjunctions, as with prepositions, **non-repetition** is apt to pervert the meaning of the sentence :—

'But perhaps one is unduly biassed by the charm of a complete escape from the thousand and one affectations, which have grown up since Fielding died, and we have all become so much wiser and more learned than all previous generations.'—LESLIE STEPHEN, *Hours in a Library* (3rd series, 1879), ch. ii. p. 92. [Repeat 'since' before 'we have.'][1]

Or, by **omitting the word** *that* the balance may be destroyed :—

'I have not given them when, perhaps, they were most necessary ; but only when I fancied [that] they might be useful, or *that* I had something pertinent to quote or to say.'—J. R. MCCULLOCH, *Catalogue of Books belonging to a Political Economist* (1862), p. viii.[1]

'We believe [that] the freedom and happiness of a people are not the result of their political institutions, but *that* their political institutions are, in great degree, the result of their own temper and aspiration.'—TH. PURNELL, *Literature and its Professors* (1867), p. 267.[1]

On the other hand *that* is often redundantly repeated :—

'It by no means follows *that* because it has been an invaluable discovery to make a portion of government depend upon a particular principle *that* every portion of a government should be deduced from that principle.'—Sir H. L. BULWER, *Historical Characters* (1868), vol. i. p. 89.[1]

'Until this be altered for the better, I do not see that we are likely to grow much wiser, or *that*, though political power may pass into different hands, *that* it will be exercised more purely or sensibly than it has been.'—Dr. ARNOLD, *Miscell. Works*, let. ii., 'Education of the Middle Classes.'[1]

Or, **instead of repeating a conjunction** used in a preceding clause we may incorrectly introduce a subsequent clause by *that*, *there*, by consciously or unconsciously imitating the French *parce que . . . que.*

'Far distant be the day *when* the minuted and measured walk along the Trumpington or the Bicester Road takes the place of the manly exercise of the cricket ground and the river, or *that* lectures

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multiply while sports decrease.'—*Quarterly Review* (1844), vol. lxxiii. p. 100.[1]

'*If* you had a niece engaged to be married, and *that* you thought,' etc.—Mrs. RIDDELL, *The World in the Church* (1863), vol. i. p. 179.[1]

Which brings us to remark that **a knowledge of a foreign language** is often of great assistance to English writers. This is exemplified **in the following instances**, and, more strongly, in the case of the pronoun : 'It is he,' etc. (*see* p. 269) :—

'I gave no more *than I could help*' is a type of an almost universal blunder ; how universal, will be felt at once from the awkward un-English sound of 'I gave no more *than I could not help*.' Yet the latter is undoubtedly correct, though it takes some little reflection to convince oneself of the fact. 'I *could not help* giving more' equals 'I *was obliged* to give more,' *not help* being a double negative, *i.e.* an affirmative ; and every one would rightly say, 'I gave no more than I *was obliged* to give.' This error is precisely similar to the last, 'seldom *or* ever' for 'seldom *if* ever' ; since people who write 'I shall give no more *than* I can help' are unconsciously following the false analogy of 'I shall give no more *if* I can help it.' For an avoidance of this error we must go back to the eighteenth century ; cases of its commission by modern authors might be multiplied *ad infinitum*.

'Of a gentleman who made some figure among the literati of his time he [Dr. Johnson] said : "What eminence he had was by a felicity of manner ; he had no more learning than what *he could not help*."'—BOSWELL, *Life of Johnson* (Croker's ed., 1860), vol. i. ch. lxviii. æt. 70, 1779, p. 629.[1]

'A lady who gives them no more trouble *than she can avoid*.'—Miss MULOCK, *A Woman's Thoughts About Women* (1858), p. 31.[1]

With the word *than* following upon *scarcely, hardly,* etc., we run another risk.

'*Scarcely* had Bentley thus established his fame in this department of letters, *than* [when] he as suddenly broke forth in a still higher.'—*Quart. Rev.* (1832), vol. xlvi. p. 126, 'Monk's Life of Bentley.'[1]

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[1] *Errors in the Use of English.* Prof. Hodgson. 7th edition. Douglas. Edin. 1896.

'*Scarcely* had she gone, *than* [when] Clodius and several of his gay companions broke in upon him.'—BULWER, *Last Days of Pompeii*, vol. i. p. 263.[1]

'But, as it happened, *scarcely* had Phœbe's eyes rested again on the judge's countenance *than* [when] all its ugly sternness vanished.'—N. HAWTHORNE, *The House of the Seven Gables*, ch. iii. p. 94.[1]

And similarly *than* is wrong when following no comparative at all :—

'I know no course of reading *so* likely on the one hand to allay the prejudices and animosities of two eager politicians, and, on the other, to rouse the careless and desponding to a generous concern and an animating hope for the public good, *than* the historical writings in question.'—F. JEFFREY, *Account of Sir J. Mackintosh's Life*, vol. ii. p. 497. ['Than' should be 'as,' or 'so likely' must be altered to 'more likely.'][1]

Errors are obvious and somewhat common in such careless phrasing as : 'He is as tall, or taller than you.'

'"Her pretty lips with blackberries were all besmeared and dyed," when, having gathered *as* many and more *than* she could possibly carry, she set off home.'—Mrs. GASKELL, *Wives and Daughters* (1867), ch. xxxiv.[1]

'The crowd had parted, and had made a circle elsewhere, and in the centre of it stood a man quite *as* noble, and even more remarkable *than* either Sir Lionel, the Rector, or Martin.'—H. KINGSLEY, *Mademoiselle Mathilde* (1868), vol. ii. p. 79. [Read, 'quite as noble as either Sir Lionel, the Rector, or Martin, and even more remarkable than they.'][1]

Another frequent mistake consists in following the word *prefer* by *than*, instead of by the preposition *to*.

'We decidedly would *prefer* reading it ["Swiss Family Robinson"] at this moment *than* the rather characterless "Masterman Ready."'—Miss YONGE, *Macmillan's Magazine*, July, 1869, p. 232, 'Children's Literature of the Last Century.' [Say, 'would rather read it,' etc.][1]

'I prefer to walk than to ride,' is as ungrammatical as : 'I prefer to walk or to ride,' would be clumsy and inharmonious.

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The blunder may easily be avoided by using the correct phrase; 'I prefer walking to riding;' or, 'I would rather walk than ride.'[1]

The co-ordinate conjunction *and* must always join words and clauses which stand **in the same relation** to other parts of the sentence. This rule is often neglected, particularly when *and* introduces a relative clause, no relative having occurred before. The following examples are correct. (*Cf.* p. 269 *et seq.*, and p. 295.)

'This nursery legend is the child's version of those superstitions *which* would have strangled in their cradles the young sciences now adolescent and able to take care of themselves, *and which*, having been driven from their nursery, are watching with hostile aspect the rapid growth of the comparatively new science of man.'—O. W. HOLMES, *The Poet at the Breakfast Table* (1872), ch. xi. p. 325.[1]

'This is the least satisfactory part of the story, *which* is full of a modest freshness and refinement, *and which* the reader will find very refreshing and delightful, amid the many hot and hasty productions of this novel-writing age.'—*Spectator*, 12th July, 1873, p. 895.[1]

'The differences might readily be accounted for as due to a bias *which* results from the whole of one's past history, *and from which* the wisest of us can free himself only by a deliberate act of intelligence and will.'—*Westminster Review*, July, 1873, p. 2.[1]

The following example is incorrect:—

'Such are a few of the many paradoxes one could cite from his writings, *and which* are now before me.'—H. L. BULWER, *Historical Characters*, 1868, vol. ii., p. 182. [Insert 'which' after 'paradoxes.'][1]

SYNTAX

The errors treated in the preceding Section occur, as we have seen, in the use of words and their inflections. These are commonly called verbal corruptions. Now we come to **errors in the construction of sentences**, which represent violations of the rules of Syntax.

These mistakes, breaches of concord, of government, and of due collocation, naturally occur more frequently in long than in short sentences.

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[1] *Errors in the Use of English.* Prof. Hodgson. 7th edition. Douglas. Edin. 1896.

The law of concord is clear and obvious. It states that **a verb must agree in number and person with its subject.** And although it might seem that only the illiterate would violate this simple rule, there is ample evidence of the fact that even the best writers have transgressed it.

In the following examples, it is hard to understand how the mistakes occurred; since the faults which slip in when we write hurriedly, come back to many of us, in the shape of 'proofs' to be corrected; but, there they stand.

'Their peculiar *haunt*, it is said, *are* the deep gorges of the mountain.'—HUC'S *Travels in Thibet*, vol. ii. p. 100.[1]

'The door of one [cell] is open; and within *stands two* cloaked *figures*.'—KINGSLEY, *Westward Ho!* (ed. 1879), ch. xxii. p. 346.[1]

'"Stop her," *was* Amyas's first *words*.'—*Ib.*, ch. xxv. p. 398.[1]

'To Marat, and Danton, and Robespierre *are* due the *honour* of having made it universal.'—J. WILLIAMS, *The Rise and Fall of the Model Republic* (1863), p. 150.[1]

The next sentence shews that it is not impossible to follow one subject by such an anomaly as **two verbs in different numbers.**

'Almost *every house* in the place *has* lodgings or *are* pensions or hotels.'—T. C. PARIS, *Letters from the Pyrenees* (1843), p. 161.[1]

After reading the above examples, we can easily understand that, in longer and more complicated sentences, the writer is liable to mistake the subject.

'His attempt to preach extempore, and the shame and pain to which his *failure expose* him, are in a small way really tragic.'—*Spectator*, 1st July, 1865, p. 724, Review of 'George Macdonald's "Alec Forbes of Howglen."' ['Failure *exposes*,' not 'shame and pain which *expose*.'][1]

'Almost every hour brings him within sight of some *scene* which *have* these marks set upon it.'—Sir H. HOLLAND, *Recollections of Past Life* (1872), p. 39. ['*Scenes* which have,' but '*some scene* which *has*.'][1]

Error of proximity. This is the name given by Dr. Abbott to an error consisting in **referring the verb to a word which is not its**

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real subject; that is to say, to an intervening noun, which is not the subject :—

'The rapid *exercise* of the repeated acts of perception *interfere* [interferes] with the simultaneous exercise of the memory.'—Dr. PUSEY, *Collegiate and Professional Teaching and Discipline* (1854), p. 18.[1]

'I learned from him that *not a line* of the lectures *were* [was] written, nor even their materials prepared.'—P. G. PATMORE, *My Friends and Acquaintances* (1854), vol. ii. p. 251, 'W. Hazlitt.'[1]

Then we come to the **real subject being obscured by two or more singular nouns**, which are not the subjects :—

'An *attention* to order, neatness, and propriety of dress, and manners too, *are* [is] perfectly consistent with the engaging virtue of which I am treating.'—Miss APPLETON, *Early Education*, p. 139.[1]

'Therefore *permission* for me to visit him in his prison, and procure him such assistance as he might need, *were* [was] readily granted.'—HOLCROFT'S *Travels*, vol. i. p. 209, 'Baron Trenck.'[1]

Two nouns or pronouns forming the subjects of the sentence and joined by the conjunction *and* demand that the verb should be in the plural. This is a rule which is constantly forgotten.

'Unconscious pioneers of all the wealth, and commerce, and beauty, and science, which *has* [have] in later centuries made that lovely isle the richest gem of all the tropic seas.'—KINGSLEY, *Westward Ho!* (ed. 1879), ch. xvii. p. 281.[1]

'Exactly opposite each other *stands* [stand] a church and a gin-palace.'—JAMES GREENWOOD, *Unsentimental Journeys* (1867), ch. ii. p. 8.[1]

'*The knowledge* gathered up during a long course of years by the different religious bodies, and *that* acquired by the recent investigations of their experienced agents, visiting independently of each other, *is* [are] concentrated into one focus, so as to throw light on each case.'—*How to Relieve the Poor of Edinburgh* (1867), p. 15.[1]

If the subject is a single infinitival clause or single substantival clause, the verb must be in the singular: 'To be honest and just is the duty of man.'

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But, in the following sentences, the incorrect form of the verb is not the only mistake :—

'*To be active* in the affairs of one's native corporation, and in settling controversies among one's friends there, *are* employments of the most laudable kind.'—MELMOTH'S *Pliny*, VII. 15. [Read, 'is an employment.'][1]

'*To aim* at public and private good *are* so far from being inconsistent, that they mutually promote each other.'—Bishop BUTLER (1726), ser. i. p. 5. [Read, 'to aim at public good and to aim at private good.'][1]

'Who are the Ministers of the Crown *are* the accidents of history.'—DISRAELI'S Manifesto, quoted in *Saturday Review*, 27th May, 1865, which notices the strangeness of the grammar. [For 'are' might be read 'belongs to.'][1]

The verb must be in the singular when a singular subject is connected with another noun by means of the words *with*, *or*, *as well as*. To quote an example from Barnes's *English Speech Craft* :—

'"The house and the goods *were* burnt;" but "the house with the goods *was* (not *were*) burnt," since it is only the house that is in the speech-case, as the goods are in the mate-case. "The house *was* burnt with the goods."' The rule requires, however, some qualification. 'A woman with a child in her arms *needs* only one ticket,' is both good grammar and good sense; but, 'A woman with a man *requires* two tickets,' is as faulty in sense as 'A woman with a man *require* two tickets,' is faulty in grammar. Where plurality is signified (as in woman+man), the copulative should be 'and,' not 'with' or 'as well as.' In the following passages, then, either the verb should have been singular, or 'and' should have been the copulative used :—

'Poor Mrs. B.'s crippled *baby*, *with* [and] all his many other failures, *were* at once forgotten by his patients.'—JN. HOLLINGSHEAD, *Ways of Life* (1861), p. 139.[1]

One of the commonest of blunders is the violation of the following well-known rule :—

The verb must be in the singular when two or more singular

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nouns are connected by *or, and, nor,* because these words respectively imply an alternative and have no sense of plurality.

'It is not that λόγος or ῥῆμα or φωνὴ *have* [has] any intrinsic superiority over *ratio* or *verbum* or *vox*,' etc.—Prof. EARLE, *The Philology of the English Tongue* (2nd ed., 1873), p. 245.[1]

'Neither the thought nor the accomplishment *were* [was] of the world.'—W. J. FOX, *Christ and Christianity*, ser. xviii. p. 244.[1]

'Indeed, neither he nor the great Mr. Addison *was* intended by nature to be *kings* [a king] of men.'—TH. PURNELL, *Literature and its Professors* (1867), p. 243, 'Swift.'[1]

'Surely none of our readers are [is] so unfortunate as not to know some *man or woman* who *carry* this atmosphere of peace and good-will about with *them*.'—HENRY KINGSLEY, *Mademoiselle Mathilde* (1868), vol. i. p. 111.[1]

A question which seems likely to remain undecided among grammarians and writers generally, may be stated as follows: **When two singular pronouns of different persons** are connected by a disjunctive pronoun, what should be the person and the number of the verb? Should we say, 'Neither he nor I am wrong;' or, 'Neither he nor I are wrong;' or, 'Neither he nor I is wrong?' Mr. Mason sanctions the first form (p. 164, *English Grammar*, 1874), but further on he declares such a sentence to be 'barbarous,' and fixes upon 'Neither you nor I are wrong.'

It is perhaps the least objectionable of the three, though it is impossible to state that it is perfectly correct. Such an alternative is, however, frequently accepted from the law of usage. The difficulty can sometimes be avoided by:—'Neither is he wrong nor am I.'

'And as he intends to push this with all his interest, neither he nor I *have* any doubt of his success.'—FIELDING, *Amelia*, bk. ix. ch. iv. par. 3.[1]

If the nominative happens to be represented by a **relative pronoun**, it is important to refer to the antecedent in order to determine the number of the verb. A common error will be found in this sentence:—

'One of the most valuable *books* that *has* appeared in any language.'

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Here, on the other hand, are instances shewing how the **mistake has been avoided.**

'There is scarcely *one* of his [De Foe's] writings *which does not* bear the impress of his deep sense of the all-outweighing importance of a religious life.'—*Nat. Rev.*, No. 6, October, 1856, p. 409. [Here the singular is correct for an obvious reason.][1]

'Professor Heyse, whose book is one of the wisest and most beautiful treatises on this subject which *have* ever fallen into my hands.'—F. W. FARRAR, *Chapters on Languages* (1865), pref., p. ix.[1]

'D'Aguesseau was one of the most illustrious of the illustrious magistrates that *have* presided in the high courts of France.'—J. R. MCCULLOCH, *A Catalogue of Books, the Property of a Political Economist* (1862), p. 28.[1]

'Arthur Penrhyn Stanley is one of those few men who naturally *rise* superior to any accidental preferment.'—Rev. F. ARNOLD, B.A., *Our Bishops and Deans* (1875), vol. ii. ch. ix. p. 237. [Correct, not 'rises.' But on p. 298 of same vol. Mr. A. says of Dean Goulburn: 'He has written one of the most useful and widely-circulated religious manuals that *has* [have] been produced for many years.'][1]

But, we find other cases in which **neither singular nor plural is absolutely incorrect**, though the use of the former instead of the latter gives the sentence a different meaning.

'And we now come to one of the causes of shipwreck which *has* never been duly considered.'—R. H. HORNE, *Gentleman's Magazine*, March, 1871, p. 437. [Ought 'has' to be 'have?' Probably not; for the writer does not seem to mean 'of the causes . . . which *have* never been . . . we come to one.' But rather, 'we come to a cause of shipwreck which *has* never,' etc. If so, it would have been better to say 'a cause' than 'one of the causes.'][1]

'This is one of the very best treatises on money and coins that *has* [have] ever been published.'—J. R. MCCULLOCH, *Literature of Political Economy* (1845), p. 163.[1]

By neglecting to ascertain the true antecedent, we frequently make use of a wrong demonstrative or relative pronoun.

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[1] *Errors in the Use of English.* Prof. Hodgson. 7th edition. Douglas. Edin. 1896.

'I am one of those who cannot describe what *I* [they] do not see.'—W. H. RUSSELL, *Diary During the Last Great War* (1874), ch. xvi. p. 514.[1]

'One of those good-hearted and morally-indolent people who let things go their own way, and *have* no thought of interfering with any one provided no one interferes with *him*' [them].—Mrs. LYNN LINTON, *Sowing the Wind* (1867), vol. i. ch. viii. p. 209.[1]

'But neither during this transient gleam of returning favour, nor after it, did M. de Talleyrand's *opinion* against the chances which Napoleon was unnecessarily (as he thought) running, ever vary; neither *were they* [was it] disguised.'—H. L. BULWER, *Historical Characters* (1868), vol. i. p. 253.[1]

An equally common error consists in using the relative in the objective case, as if it were governed by a verb inserted parenthetically. The correct usage is of course to disregard the parenthesis: 'I saw the man whom (they thought) was dead.' This is obviously bad; yet no one would think of writing, 'I thought him was dead.' But in committing the above error, we are probably misled by the fancied analogy of 'I believed him to be dead'—or 'whom I supposed to be dead.' There are instances in which the objective case is correct:—'He met the man whom (he believed) he had injured.'

'The very two individuals *whom* [who] he thought were far away.'—DISRAELI, *Vivian Grey*, bk. ii. ch. iii.[1]

'Nina was annoyed by the presence of Mr. Jekyl, *whom* [who] her brother insisted should remain to dinner.'—Mrs. H. B. STOWE, *Dred*, ch. xiv.[1]

'Mr. and Mrs. Oswell, *whom* [who] I thought were most delightful people.'—G. MELLY, *School Experiences of a Fag* (1854), p. 94.[1]

'A quiet and steady boy, *whom* [who] I firmly believed never sinned in word, thought, or action.'—*Ib.*, p. 187.[1]

'Friday, *whom* [who] he thinks would be better than a dog, and almost as good as a pony.'—*Nat. Rev.*, October, 1856, No. 6, p. 391.[1]

'The unfortunate clergy of Great Britain, *whom* [who] they concluded must all be in a state of proximate starvation.'—*Border Lands of Spain and France* (1856), ch. iii. p. 66.[1]

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[1] *Errors in the Use of English.* Prof. Hodgson. 7th edition. Douglas. Edin. 1896.

'Those two, no matter *who* spoke, or *whom* was addressed looked at each other.'—DICKENS, *Our Mutual Friend*, vol. i. pt. ii. No. 7, ch. vi. p. 218.[1]

'*Whom* they were I really cannot specify.'—Mrs. GROTE, *Life of Ary Scheffer* (1860), ch. vii. p. 76.[1]

In compound sentences, mistakes may often be avoided if we bear in mind the fact that **contraction** is permissible only **where the subjects are in the same number,** otherwise the rule of concord of subject and verb is violated.

'His kindness of heart was very great, his simplicity of character [was] extreme, and his scientific acquirements [were] considerable enough to entitle him to much reputation in the European republic of learned men.'—Mrs. GASKELL, *Wives and Daughters* (1864), ch. iv.[1]

'Still was her inward structure unchanged, her essential duties *were* unvaried, her course [was] pursued with equal success.'—Cardinal WISEMAN, *Essays on Religion and Literature* (1865), p. 15, 'Inaugural Discourse.'[1]

'The civil government was then very submissive, and heretics [were] almost unknown.'—LECKY, *History of Rationalism* (1865), vol. ii. p. 120.[1]

'At present all contributions of facts are to be welcomed, all hasty theorising [is to be] discouraged.'—*Spectator*, 2nd December, 1865, p. 985.[1]

EACH, EVERY.

These distributive pronouns must be **followed by singular nouns,** by **singular pronouns** of reference, and by **singular verbs.** The violation of this rule is exemplified in the following sentences :—

'*Each* of these circumstances being impressed upon the composer's mind, *tend* [tends] to improve and perfect his performance.'—MELMOTH'S *Pliny*, VII. 17.[1]

'*Every one* of the persons who have pews in his church *have* [has] concurred in the same sentiment.'—*Memoirs of Rev. Sydney Smith* (1855), vol. i. p. 294.[1]

'That night *every man* of the boat's crew, save Amyas, *were* [was] down with raging fever.'—KINGSLEY, *Westward Ho!* (ed. 1879), ch. xxi. p. 331.[1]

'The old man took for granted that everybody near him *were*

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[1] *Errors in the Use of English.* Prof. Hodgson. 7th edition. Douglas. Edin. 1896.

of necessity staunch Catholics.'—E. PAULET, *Dharma; or Three Phases of Love* (1865), vol. iii. p. 213. [Read, 'was a staunch Catholic.'] [1]

But a difficulty arises when **both genders** are implied in the words ***Each, Every.*** In such cases, according to Professor Bain, the plural may be used. However, there is a way out of the difficulty, and that is by the substitution of *all* or *both* (as the case may be) for the words under consideration. This will be best understood by studying the following examples :—

'It is true that when perspective was first discovered, *every body* [all] amused *themselves* with it.'—JN. RUSKIN, *The Elements of Drawing* (1857), pref., p. xviii.[1]

'He hoped *every one* [all] had enjoyed *themselves* very much.'—*Guy Livingstone* (1858), ch. ii. p. 15. ['Enjoyed themselves' is further objectionable.] [1]

'One fine afternoon, *everybody* was [all were] on deck, amusing *themselves* as *they* could.'—CHARLES READE, *Hard Cash* (ed. 1863), vol. i. p. 308.[1]

'Each thought of the other's grief,—*each* prayed for the other rather than for *themselves*.'—Mrs. GASKELL, *Mr. Harrison's Confessions* (1866), ch. vii. p. 206.[1] [In this case of father and daughter 'himself' would be incorrect. A periphrasis is here indispensable.]

'*Every one* was [all were] full of *themselves*, though each asked questions of the other, about which *they* did not care a pinch of snuff to be informed.'—*Sidney Biddulph*, vol. iv. p. 175.[1]

'*Nobody* ever put so much of *themselves* into their work.'—LESLIE STEPHEN, *Hours in a Library* (3rd series, 1879), ch. viii. p. 333, 'Charlotte Brontë.' [Sex here makes a difficulty—his or her?] [1]

ONE.

This indefinite pronoun **must not be followed by** *they* **or** *their.* Whether it is best supported by *he* and *his* (as in French, or by *one* (or *one's*) still remains a disputed point. Modern writers and grammarians generally seem to be in favour of the latter; but, the former is probably more correct. *Cf.*:—

'One could not help coveting the privileges they enjoyed for *their* sisters,' etc.—Miss M. B. EDWARDS, *A Winter with the Swallows* (1867), ch. xiv. p. 236. [Read, 'One could not help coveting for one's sisters the privileges that they enjoyed.'] [1]

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[1] *Errors in the Use of English.* Prof. Hodgson. 7th edition. Douglas. Edin. 1896.

'When *one* suddenly wakes up deaf, *one* forgets for a time that *one* has already been blind.'—W. STIGAND, *Life of H. Heine* (1875), vol. i. ch. xii. p. 342. [Not 'he,' which some writers think wrong, after 'one.'] [1]

EITHER, NEITHER.

The same rule applies to these distributive pronouns, which again must not be followed by a plural verb.

'*Neither* of these boys *were* [was] so remarkable for their talent as for [the] thoroughness of their work.' — Rev. G. BUTLER, *Woman's Work and Woman's Culture* (1869), p. 68. [Omit 'their' in both lines.][1]

'In this composition *neither* of the arms *cross* [es] the body.'—Lady EASTLAKE, *Life of John Gibson* (1870), ch. viii. p. 185.[1]

'I shall be almost pleased if either Mansel or T. S. Baynes *are* [is] able, on any particular points, to weaken the force of it.'—GEORGE GROTE to J. S. Mill (1865), *Life of G. G.* (1873), ch. xxxiii. p. 275.[1]

KIND, SORT.

Another blunder, and a bad one, lies in **using the words** *these* **and** *those* before the nouns *kind* **or** *sort.*

'I always delight in overthrowing *those* [that] *kind* of schemes, and cheating a person of *their* [his] premeditated contempt.'—Miss AUSTEN, *Pride and Prejudice*, ch. x.[1]

'You have been so used to *these* [this] *sort* of impertinences,' etc.—Rev. SYD. SMITH to C. Dickens, 6th January, 1843, vol. ii. let. ccccxciii. p. 481.[1]

'Would it not be better to keep some memorandum of *these* [this] *sort* of engagements?'—*Id.*, *ib.*, vol. ii. let. clxi. p. 177.[1]

GOVERNMENT.

The elementary rule is : **Transitive verbs,** with their participles and gerunds, **govern the objective case.**

In the following passages, the rule has been disregarded :—

'*He*, who had always inspired in her a respect which almost overcame her affection, she now *saw* the object of open pleasantry.'—Miss AUSTEN, *Pride and Prejudice*, ch. lxi. [For 'he' read 'him.'][1]

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[1] *Errors in the Use of English.* Prof. Hodgson. 7th edition. Douglas. Edin. 1896.

'I experienced little difficulty in *distinguishing* from among the pedestrians who thronged the pavement *they* [those] who had business with St. Bartholomew.'—JAMES GREENWOOD, *Unsentimental Journeys* (1867), p. 1.[1]

'*Let* you and *I* [me] look at these, for they say that there are none such in the world.'—HY. KINGSLEY, *Mademoiselle Mathilde* (1868), vol. iii. p. 130.[1]

Since conjunctions connect nouns and pronouns in the same case—since a noun or pronoun placed in apposition must be in the same case as the noun or pronoun to which it is apposed, the following sentences are also incorrect—and, since, in English, euphony is more important than the pedantry of grammar, the student will note that they are sometimes better 'incorrect.'

'No more Spaniard-hunting for me now, my masters. God will send no such fools as *I* [me] upon His errands.'—KINGSLEY, *Westward Ho!* (ed. 1879), ch. xxxii. p. 513. [The opposite of this error is made in—'"Nonsense!" said Amyas, "we could kill every soul of them in half an hour, and they know that as well as *me* [I do]."'—*Ib.*, ch. xxiv. p. 363. And: 'She is not even as big as *me* [I am].'—*Ib.*, ch. xxviii. p. 445.][1]

'In this state Frank Churchill had found her, *she* [her] trembling, *they* [them] loud and insolent.'—Miss AUSTEN, *Emma*, ch. xxxix.[1]

'May Heaven only keep *us* a long time yet in the same relation—*he* [him] wondering, *I* [me] not.'—LESSING, quoted in Stahr's *Life of Lessing*, translated by E. P. Evans (Boston, 1866), vol. ii. bk. xii. ch. v. p. 264.[1]

Here follow examples of the violation of another rule: **After prepositions a noun or pronoun must be in the objective case,** both when the preposition is immediately followed by the noun or pronoun, and when the latter stands in apposition. Here again, the breach of the rule is sometimes better than the observance.

'God forbid that John Hawkins's wife should refuse her last penny *to* a distressed mariner, and *he* [him] a gentleman born.'—KINGSLEY, *Westward Ho!* (ed. 1879), ch. xiii. p. 233.[1]

'I don't forget the danger and the woe *of* one weak woman, and *she* [her] the daughter of a man who once stood in this room.'—*Ib.*, ch. xxix. p. 469.[1]

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[1] *Errors in the Use of English.* Prof. Hodgson. 7th edition. Douglas. Edin. 1896.

'It is characteristic of them to appear but *to* one person, and *he* the most interested, the most likely to be deluded,' etc.—W. J. FOX, *Works*, vol. ii. p. 331. [False apposition, 'one' objective, 'he' nominative. Substitute 'that.'][1]

'*Besides* my father and Uncle Haddock—*he* [him] of the silver plates,' etc.—JAMES GREENWOOD, *Unsentimental Journeys* (1867), p. 140.[1]

'And the major-domo, without the wildest idea of what Father Martin spoke about, said promptly, with the well-trained dexterity *of* an old servant, and *he* [him] a Frenchman : "Such a course would be wrong in two ways."'—HENRY KINGSLEY, *Mademoiselle Mathilde* (1868) vol. iii. p. 50.[1]

The following sentence is correct, but very ill expressed : 'Nobody in the world had ever the least control over him but her.' (W. BLACK, *Cornhill* 1875) ; because here *but* is a preposition. It should however be carefully noted that *than* is always a conjunction, that it has no governing force, and that it must couple similar cases, nominatives with nominatives—not nominatives with objectives, or *vice-versâ*. Nevertheless (again) while noting the subtlety of the rule, it is better to err, for the sake of euphony, with Dickens, Kingsley, and the rest of a goodly company. But, in cases of doubt regarding *than*, the safest rule is to complete the sentence by supplying the words understood. For instance, in such a sentence as :—Follow to the grave the body of a better man than I—'am' is understood.

'The smooth manner of the spy, curiously in dissonance with his ostentatiously rough dress, and probably with his usual demeanour, received such a check from the inscrutability of Carton—who was a mystery to wiser and honester men than *he* [him]—that it faltered here, and failed him.'—DICKENS, *A Tale of Two Cities*, bk. iii. ch. viii.[1]

'I'll tell you what, brother Frank, you are a great deal wiser than *me* [I am], I know ; but I can't abide to see you turn up your nose as it were at God's good earth.'—KINGSLEY, *Westward Ho!* (ed. 1879), ch. xvii. p. 280.[1]

'Think not of me, good folks, nor talk of me ; but come behind me decently, as Christian men, and follow to the grave the body of a better man than *I* [me].'—*Ib.*, ch. xxxiii. p. 515.[1]

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[1] *Errors in the Use of English.* Prof. Hodgson. 7th edition. Douglas. Edin. 1896.

There should be no doubt as to the proper **case to use after the auxiliary verb 'to be.'** It must, of course, be the **nominative.** Yet we constantly come across violations of the rule, in such common expressions as 'It is me'—'That is her,' etc. (*Cf.* p. 283.)

Contracted sentences offer many opportunities of violating the rules of government, in that the writer is apt to **overlook the relative.** (*Cf.* PRONOUN, p. 270).

'One of the last of his parliamentary speeches was delivered in defence of Warren Hastings, *with whom* he was on terms of intimate friendship, and [whom he] regarded as a consummate statesman and the saviour of India.'—W. F. RAE, *John Wilkes* (1874), p. 114.[1]

'He had boldly exposed the negligence, the ignorance, the low taste, and particular shortcomings of those *on whom* British art had to rely, and [whom] society believed in.'—*Memoir of B. R. Haydon* (1876), vol. i. p. 67.[1]

'While at Brussels, he fought a duel by moonlight with a Spaniard *with whom* he had been gambling, and [whom he] suspected of cheating him.'—Lady JACKSON, *Old Paris* (1878), vol. i. ch. xxv. p. 341.[1]

COLLOCATION.

Collocation is the third branch of Syntax. It deals with the **order of words.** All violations of the rules connected with the order of words, naturally cause confusion, obscure the sense of phrases, detract from perfection in style and result in ridiculous mistakes.

These considerations remind us that all writers should exercise a certain amount of courtesy to their readers, since upon the manner in which the sense of the passage is presented to the mind of the latter, will depend the satisfaction derived from the reading thereof.

The general principles to be observed are:—**Mention first what is to be thought of first;** place in close conjunction things which are to be thought of together; arrange compound sentences so that there is no obscure meaning.

And, moreover, to arrange them in such a way, that the sense conveyed will not be grotesque, or disturbing to the mind.

'Paid to a woman whose husband was drowned by order of the

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[1] *Errors in the Use of English.* Prof. Hodgson. 7th edition. Douglas. Edin. 1896.

vestry under London Bridge, £1, 1s.'—Books of an Overseer of a London vestry.[1]

'Erected to the memory of John Phillips accidentally shot as a mark of affection by his brother.'—Epitaph in an Ulster churchyard.[1]

'The Board of Education has resolved to erect a building large enough to accommodate 500 students three stories high.'—Wisconsin paper.[1]

'The beaux of that day used the abominable art of painting their faces, *as well as the women.*'—ISAAC D'ISRAELI, *Curiosities of Literature.* [The last five words should follow 'beaux.'][1]

'Hence he considered marriage *with a modern political economist* as very dangerous.'—*Ib.* ['hence.'][1]

'You might not have distinguished how I came *by my look and manner.*'—Miss AUSTEN, *Emma*, ch. xxvi. [Ambiguous; it should be 'distinguished by my look,' etc.][1]

'Mrs. Jennings entered the drawing-room, where Elinor was sitting by herself, *with an air of such hurrying importance as prepared her to hear something wonderful.*'—*Id.*, *Sense and Sensibility*, ch. xxxvii. [This sentence requires to be re-arranged.][1]

'I earnestly pressed his coming to us, *in my letter*,' etc.—*Id.*, *ib.*, ch. xlviii. ['In my letter' should either stand first or follow 'earnestly.'][1]

The misuse of adverbs is a frequent cause of confusion. Apart from the fact that this part of speech should not be used indiscriminately, it is advisable to be careful in fixing its real place in the sentence.

For instance, with **the adverb** *only*, it makes a material difference whether it is prefixed to the verb or to the object. Take for instance the following :—

'I saw only John and Charles,' and, 'I only saw John and Charles.'

For the **collocation of adverbs** this rule must be followed :—

Adverbs and adverbial adjuncts must be so placed as to affect what they are intended to affect.

Not only, not merely, both, are obviously misplaced in the following examples :—

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[1] *Errors in the Use of English.* Prof. Hodgson. 7th edition. Douglas. Edin. 1896.

'They will, too, *not merely* interest children, but grown-up persons.'—*Westminster Review*, July, 1869, p. 308. ['Not merely' should follow, not precede, 'interest.'][1]

'The author has sat at the feet of our Elizabethan dramatists, and in one or two places has caught *not merely* their idioms and phrases, but has become imbued with something of their high manner of spirit.'—*Ib.*, p. 313. ['Not merely' should precede 'caught.'][1]

'It is perhaps the finest of all Juvenal's satires, the mightiest, the sternest, and [the] most deeply impressed, *not merely* by a sense of the bitterness, but also of the deep responsibility of human life.'—*Ib.*, p. 314. ['Not merely' should follow 'sense.'][1]

'Homer was *not only* the maker of a nation, but of a language and of a religion.'—*Athenæum*, 10th July, 1869, p. 40. ['Not only, should follow 'maker.'][1]

'Happiness has always seemed to me a much greater improver *both* of the mind and [of] the temper. Many a heart which has been shut and withered by unkindness opens like a flower when light and warmth are let into it.'—Miss MITFORD to B. R. Haydon, *Memoir of H.* (1876), vol. ii. p. 63.[1]

And it must be remembered that mere transposition will not always render a faulty passage correct:—

'The Senators, frightened at his approach, *not only* chose him Consul, but as he thought he had now no further occasion for Cicero's credit, he caused Quintus Pedius, one of his relations, and a legatee of the Dictator, to be chosen second Consul to his exclusion.'—VERTOT, *Rom. Repub.*, vol. ii. p. 397. [Read, 'Not only did the Senators . . . choose him Consul, but,' etc.][1]

'Their laws are like those made in a republic; they are for the government *not only* of those who are to obey them, but for those who make them.'—SULLIVAN, *Moral Class Book*, 'Imitation.' ['Not only' should precede 'for the government,' but even then the sentence is awkwardly balanced.][1]

Either . . . or, neither . . . nor, must be used with care. Being correlatives, *either* and *neither* are followed respectively by the words *or,* and *nor,* and must stand before the same part of speech.

Although there is no ambiguity apparent in: 'I have not

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[1] *Errors in the Use of English.* Prof. Hodgson. 7th edition. Douglas. Edin. 1896.

heard either from John or Charles,' the sentence produces an ill-balanced effect.

The first three following examples show the **incorrect use of *or*** as the correlative of *neither;* the rest exemplify **incorrect collocation :—**

'Its almost vulgar personality may convey to those who are *neither* acquainted with the writer *or* his works, not altogether an inadequate impression of both.'—*Quarterly Review* (1832), vol. xlvi. p. 127. [Three errors at least. Read, 'acquainted neither with the writer nor with his works,' or 'with neither the writer nor his works' :—also 'a not altogether inadequate.'][1]

'I am *neither* an ascetic in theory *or* practice.'—Speech of Hon. R. LOWE, M.P., 3rd May, 1865, p. 10. [It should be, 'I am not an ascetic either in theory or in practice.' There are thus three errors in one line of nine words. Pretty well for the ex-Vice-President of the Committee of Council on Education !][1]

'If I should fail to make my appearance next month, you will *neither* believe the stories in circulation that I have been hanged in Poland *or* murdered in [on] an English railway ; that I am under sentence of [?] bigamy, convicted of felony, *or* a major-general in the Federal army of America.'—*Cornelius O'Dowd upon Men and Women* (2nd series, 1865), p. 144. [For 'neither' read 'not.'][1]

'The obvious and acknowledged evils which the best-worked poor-law *either* produces, *nor* can *neither* prevent *nor* cure.'—Dr CHALMERS, quoted in *How to Relieve the Poor of Edinburgh* (1867), p. 29. [Read, 'or cannot prevent or cure.'][1]

'But although Mary was thus destined to bloom like a rose in a conservatory, her days *neither* passed in indolence nor without enjoyment.'—GALT'S *Sir Andrew Wylie*, vol. iii. p. 56. [Read 'passed neither,' etc.][1]

'SPLIT INFINITIVE.'

An instance of an error of collocation will be found in the placing of **adverbs between the infinitival *to* and the infinitive,** commonly called the 'split infinitive,' 'To bravely die.' This is contrary to established precedent, and is otherwise faulty, if only because the preposition '*to*' suggests the ambiguity '*too* bravely.'

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[1] *Errors in the Use of English.* Prof. Hodgson. 7th edition. Douglas. Edin. 1896.

PRACTICE SUBJECTS

I. On Going a Journey.
II. On Taste.
III. Novelists of the Day.
IV. On Romance.
V. Town and Country Life Compared.
VI. School Magazines.
VII. A Country Walk.
VIII. The Pleasures and Pains of School Life.
IX. On Vulgarity and Affectation.
X. The Qualities of a Good Essay.

SOME OF THE SUBJECTS SET FOR THE OXFORD AND CAMBRIDGE SENIOR LOCAL EXAMINATION

Books of Travel.
Thoroughness.
Eloquence as a Power in the World.
The Effect of Poverty on Character.
The Pleasures of a Country Life as enhanced by the Study of Physical Science.
Tennyson.
Printing.
Enthusiasm.
Japan.
The Drama and the Novel as Vehicles of Education.
Patriotism.
Rain.
Bicycling.
Photography.

Time allowed for the following—Half-an-hour.

A Cricket Match.
Stupid People.
A Favourite Book of yours.
A Backward Spring.
Free Education in Elementary Schools.
Sympathy.
'The heights by great men reached and kept
Were not attained by sudden flight.'

Technical Education.
Gambling.
An Alarm of Fire.
'All that glitters is not gold.'
'To be Prepared for War is one of the most Effectual Means of Preserving Peace.'
Punctuality.
A Strike.
Sunrise.
Free Libraries.
'A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.'
'Evil is wrought by want of thought
As well as want of heart.'
Some Ancient Building which you have visited.
European Disarmament.
Camping Out.
Wasps.
A Summer Night.
'There is no new thing under the sun.'
'I am never less lonely than when I am alone.'
Clouds.
One of Sir Walter Scott's Novels.
South Africa.
'The Fairy Tales of Science.'
Duty, 'Stern daughter of the Voice of God.'
'We live in deeds, not years.'
'The old order changeth, yielding place to new.'
The Sun.
Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe* or *Kenilworth*.
A Ruined Abbey.
Nelson.

SOME OF THE SUBJECTS SET SINCE 1892 BY THE OXFORD AND CAMBRIDGE SCHOOLS EXAMINATION BOARD FOR THE HIGHER CERTIFICATE (ENGLISH ESSAY) EXAMINATION

The Advantages and Disadvantages of a wide-spread Colonial Empire.
The Contrast between True Courage and Rashness.

An Ideal English Garden.
Some of the most marked Features of Life in England in the Days of Elizabeth.
A Description of your Favourite Hero in History, with reasons for your preference.
The Difficulties of Socialism.
The Election of Poet Laureate.
The Causes which lead to Periods of great Literary Activity.
Life in a Greek City.
An Elizabethan Courtier.
The Advantages of Travel.
Chivalry.
The Choice of a Profession.
The Influence of Poetry and Music Compared.
Patriotism.
The Debt of Englishmen to Greece.
A Country Walk in Spring.
The Character of Shakespeare as exhibited in what we know of his Life.
Heraldry.
'O well for him whose will is strong!
He suffers, but he will not suffer long.'
The Love of Books.
Life in an English Village.
Novelists of the Last Half of the Nineteenth Century.
The Influence of Poetry upon Conduct.
The Decay of Nations.
The Prospect of Universal Peace.
Humour.
A Defence of War.
Kipling's Schoolboys.
Elizabethan Comedy.
Irony.
Queen Victoria.
The Art of Letter-writing.
Equality.
The Poetry of the Last Half of the Nineteenth Century.
The Future of China.
Shakespearian Comedy.
The Efficacy of Corporal Punishment.
The Unpopularity of Englishmen Abroad.

SUBJECTS SET FOR THE IRISH INTERMEDIATE EXAMINATIONS, 1892 TO 1902

PREPARATORY GRADE.—*Age*, 12 to 14. (*Raised in* 1902 *to* 13 to 15.)

1892.—The Advantages of being Able to Govern. 'Nothing venture, nothing have.'

1893.—A Country Drive, or Walk, in Winter. 'Use lessens Marvel.' An Irish Fairy Tale.

1894.— 'There is a pleasure in the pathless woods,
There is a rapture on the lonely shore.'
Describe an Imaginary Balloon Voyage. Compare a Life of Idleness with a Life of Activity and Work.

1895.—The Best Mode of Spending a Winter's Evening. Fidelity of Animals to Men. The Advantages of Contentment.

1896. —Any Deed of Heroism that has interested you. Mountain Scenery. Home, Sweet Home.

1897.—Any Great Disaster, on Sea or Land, which has interested you. Some of the Uses of Iron. 'Waste not, want not.'

1898.—The Pleasures of Gardening. Your Favourite Animal. School Punishments. The Good Old Days.

1899.—The Country you would most Like to Visit, and for what Reasons. 'Be just, and fear not.' Contrast the Appearance of the Country in Spring and Autumn.

1900.—Recollections of your Early Life. A Dream (real or imaginary).

'Breathes there a man, with soul so dead,
Who never to himself hath said,
This is my own, my native land!'

1901.—The Story of an Eventful Day in History, or in your own Life. A Boarding School or a Day School: which do you think better, and why?

'O, it is excellent
To have a giant's strength; but it is tyrannous
To use it like a giant.'

1902.—Solitude.

JUNIOR GRADE.—*Age*, 14 to 16.

1892.—The Way in which you propose to Spend the Summer Holidays.

'Variety's the very spice of life,
That gives it all its flavour.'

1893.—Irish Song Birds. 'A kind action is never lost.' A Famous Fight by Sea or Land.

1894.—Animal Pets. Ulysses. 'Necessity is the mother of invention.'

1895.—What Profession or Business would you like to adopt, and Why? The Importance of Trifles. 'Slow rises worth by poverty depressed.'

1896.— 'Do not defer 'till morrow to be wise,
To-morrow's sun to thee may never rise.'

The Lifeboat Service, its Advantages and Dangers. A Summer Holiday on the River.

1897.—The Educational Advantages of Travel. The Games you most Enjoy. A Good Name is better than Great Riches.

1898.—Your Idea of a Hero. A Ghost Story.
'Beware of saying I can't!
'Tis a cowardly word,
And apt to lead
To idleness, folly, and want.'

1899.—Your Notion of a True Friend. A Description of any good Football or Cricket Match that you have seen. 'Hope springs eternal in the human breast.'

1900.—The relative Advantages of the Horse and the Bicycle. Photography. 'A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.'

1901.—Cruelty to Animals. The Perils and Pleasures of Life at Sea. 'No pains, no gains.' The Influence of Music.

1902.—The Pen in Addison's Time was a more formidable engine than the Tongue. Narrow-mindedness. The Sacrifice of Enoch Arden.

MIDDLE GRADE.—*Age*, 16 to 17.

1892.—Punctuality.

'Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control,
These three alone lead life to sovereign power.'
Cardinal Wolsey.

1893.— 'Obedience is the bond of rule.' (*Morte d'Arthur*).

''Tis distance lends enchantment to the view.'
(*Campbell*).

Relate the Incidents of a Heroic Deed with which you are familiar.

1894.—Life at the Equator. The Influence of Literature on Social Life.

'Absence of occupation is not rest,
A mind quite vacant is a mind distrest.'

1895.—'Where there's a will, there's a way.' The Wars of History.

'Of all the sad words of tongue or pen,
The saddest are these: it might have been.'
(*Whittier*).

1896.—A Winter Landscape. Tramways.

'If nothing more than purpose in thy power,
Thy purpose firm is equal to the deed.' (*Young*).

1897.—Describe the Plot of any Work of Fiction you have read.

'Ye gentlemen of England that live at home in ease,
Ah! little do ye think upon the dangers of the seas.'

'Gay hope is theirs by fancy fed,
Less pleasing when possest.'

1898.—King Arthur. American-Indian Warfare. The Protection of Song Birds.

1899.—An Adventure (real or imaginary) in a Railway Signal-box. A Cycling Tour in Ireland. Music.

1900.—Chivalry: Mediæval and Modern. 'Procrastination is the thief of time.' Camping Out.

1901.—The Pleasures of Travel in Modern Times. How Machinery affects the Development of Trades.

'For praise too dearly loved, or warmly sought,
Enfeebles all internal strength of thought,
And the weak soul, within itself unblest,
Leans for all pleasure on another's breast.'

1902.—The Literary Hack in the Days of Johnson. Hector and Achilles tried by Modern Standards of Military Heroism. The Untrustworthy Character of the Muse of History.

SENIOR GRADE.—*Age*, 17 to 18.

1892.—The Educational Value of Examinations. Contrast the Characters of King Richard II. and Bolingbroke, as depicted by Shakespeare. 'Content is a kingdom.'

1893.—'Your Ideal Friend.' 'England, the Mother of Nations.'
'Manners with fortunes, humours turn with climes,
Tenets with books, and principles with times.'

1894.—Common Sense.

Goldsmith's Estimate of Burke :—
'Here lies our good Edmund, whose genius was such,
We scarcely can praise him or blame him too much ;
Who, born for the Universe, narrowed his mind,
And to party gave up what was meant for Mankind.'

'For a crowd is not company, and faces but a gallery of pictures, and talk but a tinkling cymbal, where there is no love . . . A great city, a great solitude.' (*Bacon*).

1895.—'There is no one so simple but assumes
Some mark of virtue on his outward parts.'

The Disadvantage of the Multiplication of Books and Periodical Literature. The Value of Examination as a Test of Educational Proficiency.

1896.—'The evil that men do lives after them,
The good is oft interred with their bones.'

'Be not the first by whom the new is tried,
Nor yet the last to lay the old aside.'

The Influence of Music.

1897.—'Man is by nothing so well betrayed as by his manners.' (*Spencer*).

The Advantages of Public Libraries. Men of Thought and Men of Action.

1898.—The desirability of making Hand and Eye Training an ordinary branch of School Education.

'Men may rise on stepping-stones
Of their dead selves, to higher things.'

The Uses and Abuses of Satire. A Liberal Education.

1899.—The Character and Policy of Bolingbroke. The Gentle Art of Pleasing.

'Wise men ne'er sit and wail their woes,
But presently prevent the ways to wail.'

1900.—The Use and Abuse of Prose Fiction. Patriotism.

'We are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep.'

1901.—The Influence of Our Daily Surroundings. India and its Conquerors. 'Men at some time are masters of their fates.'

1902.—The Style is the Man. The Aims and Pursuits of Women: Should they be identical with those of Men.

SUBJECTS SET FOR ARMY EXAMINATIONS SINCE 1884

1. The Effects of War upon National Character.
2. 'Peace hath her victories,
No less renowned than War.'
3. The Value of the Memories of Great Men.
4. Can a great General be also a great Statesman?
5. The Change effected by the Electric Telegraph in conducting the Government of Distant Dependencies, and how far that Change is beneficial or the reverse.
6. The Use and Abuse of Ridicule.
7. The Influence of Climate on the Amusements.
8. The Tongue, the Pen and the Sword as instruments of Government.
9. Cricket as a School of Discipline.
10. The Influence of the United States on England.
11. Duelling.
12. Sea Voyages in Ancient and Modern Times.

13. Picture England suddenly deprived of the Services of Steam Electricity and Gas.
14. A Day at Henley Regatta.
15. The Nineteenth Century—a Retrospect.
16. Courtesy.
17. England's Work in Egypt.
18. The Englishman Abroad and the Foreigner in England.
19. 'Trade follows the Flag.'
20. 'History is the Biography of Great Men.'
21. The Federation of the British Empire, from a Military point of view.
22. Safeguards against an Invasion of England.
23. A Cruise in the Mediterranean.
24. Causes of Desertion from the Army.
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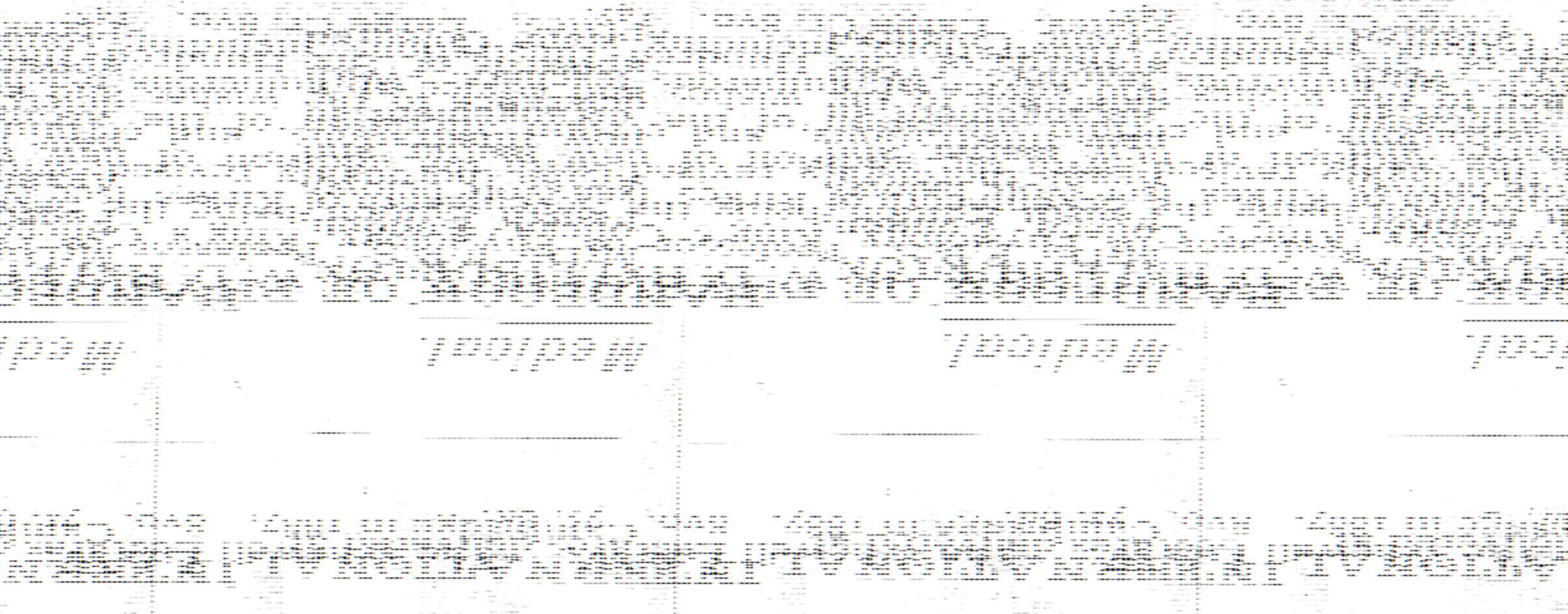
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